



THE 2012 REPORT CARD ON LARGE PARKS





New Yorkers for Parks
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GREAT PARKS MAKE A GREAT CITY

New Yorkers for Parks is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods.

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Letter from the Executive Director

New Yorkers for Parks' Report Card series is the only independent assessment of the maintenance conditions of parks, playgrounds, fields and beaches in all five boroughs. The project was designed in 2002 as an easy-to-use tool for park advocates and public officials to compare their local parks to other similar resources citywide.

This is our second *Report Card on Large Parks*, defined as public spaces between 20 and 500 acres. Large parks are a particularly precious asset in a city as dense as New York, offering a wide range of recreational and passive opportunities—from woodland trails, to bustling courts and ball fields, to sweeping lawns. But they also pose unique maintenance challenges. Keeping those immensely popular lawns green, ensuring heavily used drinking fountains are in working order all summer, and plucking trash from hard-to-reach rock ledges and natural areas requires a never-ending cycle of upkeep and repair.

Our first large parks report, released in 2011, found that the vast majority of the parks we surveyed scored an A or B, and only one park received a failing grade. And this time around, even more parks—88 percent—scored an A or B.

On the face of it, this is encouraging news. But when you scratch below the surface and look at trends across park features, it becomes apparent that the Parks Department is caught in a property management version of “Whac-A-Mole:” in order to address one problem, resources must be pulled from another area, causing a new problem to arise in that area. Bottom line: the Parks Department simply does not have sufficient resources to keep up with the endless demands of maintaining the City's 29,000 acres of parkland—including the more than 3,600 acres spotlighted in this report.

We can't keep asking the Parks Department to do more with less. At some point, we have to acknowledge that only by growing the budgetary pie can we expect New York's park system to be maintained at the high level of care we've come to expect in the past two decades.

Like much of our research, issuing this report is just the first step in advocating for improvements to these parks. We'll be reaching out to community stakeholders and the Parks Department to better understand existing problems in the lowest-scoring parks, and to help find solutions. And if history repeats itself, we will find local advocates in every affected neighborhood eager to join in this effort.

We can't do the work we do without New Yorkers who are committed to their local parks, or without a well-funded Parks Department. We hope this report will inspire further investment in our park system to ensure it lives up to the standard that all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods deserve.

Holly Leicht
Executive Director

The Report Card on Large Parks

The Report Card as a Tool

In 2002 New Yorkers for Parks released our first *Report Card on Parks*, and over the past decade we have provided 12 independent data-driven evaluations of the conditions of playgrounds, small parks, beaches, and turf fields across the city.

The Report Card on Parks was designed to achieve the following goals:

- Provide an independent assessment of park performance against defined maintenance benchmarks
- Provide park advocates and local elected officials with a comparative assessment of park maintenance across the city, providing data for advocates to make an effective case for their parks' needs
- Highlight high-performing parks, drawing attention to the lessons we can learn from their successful maintenance and upkeep
- Highlight low-performing parks, drawing attention to immediate maintenance issues and encouraging a more efficient and equitable distribution of limited resources toward the parks that are most in need

Maintenance Challenges in Large Parks

In 2010 we tailored the *Report Card* to focus on the maintenance conditions of large parks. The scale of large parks, coupled with the variety of their amenities and topographic features, creates unique maintenance challenges. For the past 8 years, large parks have consistently performed worse than smaller parks and playgrounds on the Parks Department Park Inspection Program cleanliness evaluations. Last year 87% of small parks and playgrounds earned acceptable cleanliness ratings, while only 77% of large parks were deemed acceptable.¹

The Report Card on Large Parks is a comparative analysis of 43 parks across the five boroughs. Large parks provide a variety of opportunities for physical activity, passive recreation, and exposure to unique natural landscapes. The large parks in our survey offer myriad recreational facilities, from bocce courts to baseball fields to nature trails. They contain stunningly diverse natural landscapes and offer iconic views of the Manhattan skyline, the hilly coastline of Staten Island, the Statue of Liberty, and Jamaica Bay. These parks serve neighbors and visitors alike, with opportunities for social gatherings at ball fields, picnics and barbecues, and dog runs.

In the summer of 2012 we returned to the field, revisiting and reassessing the large parks covered in our 2010 survey. This *Report Card on Large Parks* provides a snapshot of conditions within large parks, as well as a comprehensive picture of the maintenance conditions of park features across the city. We hope our data will support informed and targeted maintenance strategies, as well as increased funding to improve large park conditions.

Map of Survey Sites

BRONX

1. Claremont Park
2. Crotona Park
3. Seton Falls Park
4. Soundview Park
5. St. Mary's Park

BROOKLYN

6. Asser Levy Park
7. Coney Island Boat Basin (Six Diamonds)
8. Fort Greene Park
9. Highland Park (BK)
10. Kaiser Park
11. McCarren Park
12. Parade Ground
13. Red Hook Recreation Area
14. Shore Road Park
15. Sunset Park

MANHATTAN

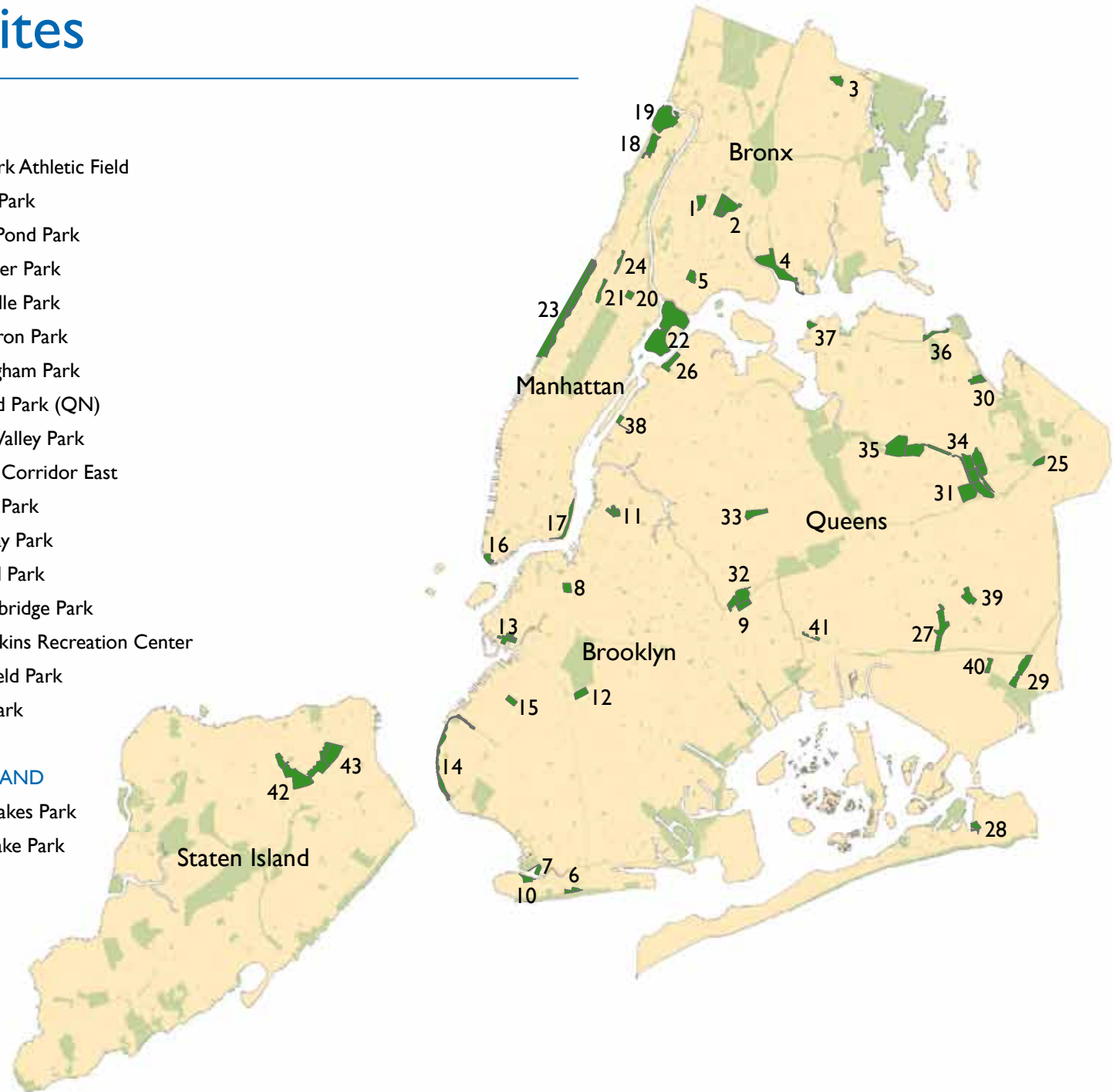
16. Battery Park
17. East River Park
18. Fort Tryon Park
19. Inwood Hill Park
20. Marcus Garvey Park
21. Morningside Park
22. Randall's Island Park
23. Riverside Park
24. St. Nicholas Park

QUEENS

25. Alley Park Athletic Field
26. Astoria Park
27. Baisley Pond Park
28. Bayswater Park
29. Brookville Park
30. Crocheron Park
31. Cunningham Park
32. Highland Park (QN)
33. Juniper Valley Park
34. Kissena Corridor East
35. Kissena Park
36. Little Bay Park
37. MacNeil Park
38. Queensbridge Park
39. Roy Wilkins Recreation Center
40. Springfield Park
41. Tudor Park

STATEN ISLAND

42. Clove Lakes Park
43. Silver Lake Park



Summary of Methods

Park selection: *The Report Card on Large Parks* surveys NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) properties between 20 and 500 acres. We removed the following categories of property from our final survey: highway properties, undeveloped parkland, islands, gardens, golf courses, marshes, beaches, forests, properties without active recreation, properties undergoing significant capital projects, and parks in which all zones are larger than 50 acres. The final survey universe includes 43 parks.²

Zone selection: DPR divides all large parks into maintenance zones called Park Inspection Program (PIP) Zones. The zone boundaries often follow pathways, streets, physical barriers such as tree lines or



Surveyor in the field

hills, or a cluster of active recreation features. Due to the large size of the parks, an evaluation of the total acreage of every property was not feasible. To address this challenge, NY4P surveyed a randomly selected subset of PIP zones within each of our 43 parks. We surveyed, on average, 54% of the total land within each park.

Survey schedule: Survey work began in late May 2012 and concluded in mid-August. Surveyors, working in teams of two, visited parks between 10am and 5pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Surveyors did not visit parks the day after Memorial Day or the Fourth of July to allow DPR staff time to clean after major holiday celebrations.

Survey protocol: *The Report Card on Large Parks* examines 11 categories of park features: athletic fields, bathrooms, courts, drinking fountains, lawns, natural areas, pathways, playgrounds, sitting areas, trees, and water bodies.³

Each feature is evaluated for performance in four categories:

- Maintenance
- Cleanliness
- Safety
- Structural integrity

Surveyors record feature assessments on handheld computers and provide photographic documentation for each unique feature evaluation.

Letter grades: Each park received a feature score (0 to 100) for each of the 11 features present in the survey zones (parks were not penalized if they did not contain all 11 features). Feature scores were then aggregated and weighted to arrive at an overall park score of 0 to 100. A detailed discussion of the scoring methodology can be found in the Appendix. Overall park numerical scores correspond to the following letter grade conversions:

Numerical Scores	Letter Grade
97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
59 and below	F

Summary of Features

2012 Feature Scores: Rank Order	
Sitting Areas	95
Natural Areas	91
Courts	91
Athletic Fields	90
Playgrounds	90
Trees	90
Lawns	87
Bathrooms	87
Pathways	87
Water Bodies	83
Drinking Fountains	75

The Report Card on Large Parks assesses the condition of 11 features within each of the 43 parks in our survey. On a field visit, surveyors evaluate the condition of every discrete bathroom, court, drinking fountain, field, lawn, natural area, playground, and sitting area. Surveyors evaluate the zone-wide condition of trees, pathways, and water bodies. In this section we discuss the average performance of large park features across the 43 parks citywide, pointing to improvements, continuing concerns, and notable changes from our 2010 survey.

On average, more features improved than declined between 2010 and 2012. However, the citywide average feature scores mask considerable variability in the performance of features from park to park and within parks from year to year.

Athletic Fields: 90

2010 score: 84

The athletic fields score evaluates natural grass, asphalt, and synthetic soccer, football, and baseball fields.

The overall athletic fields score increased from 2010 to 2012. In 2012 surveyors found fewer bare spots and less overgrowth on the grass fields. The most common challenge to asphalt courts was extensive cracking and weed growth. Common problems on natural grass fields included standing water and unevenly graded infields. More than one-quarter of turf fields demonstrated significant surface wear.



Fields in Queensbridge Park received an A.



Puddles and uneven grading were common problems on natural grass athletic fields.

Bathrooms: 87

2010 score: 86

The bathrooms score evaluates each discrete bathroom or comfort station.

Overall the condition of bathrooms remained stable. However, stall doors did not properly shut in 30% of the bathrooms surveyed, and over 25% of bathrooms lacked a working soap dispenser. Five percent of bathrooms in the survey received automatic failing grades for blocked facilities or missing equipment.



In 2010 more than half of bathrooms lacked soap. In 2012 just over one-quarter lacked soap.



Surveyors encountered bathrooms that were used as storage areas.

Courts: 91

2010 score: 90

The courts score evaluates all basketball, handball, tennis, bocce, volleyball and hockey facilities.

Courts performed well overall, with 46% of surveyed parks scoring an A. Surveyors found no instances of excessive litter or broken glass on courts and only two examples of vandalism or graffiti in over 200 courts across the city. However, 55% of tennis, volleyball and basketball courts were missing at least half of their nets.



New York City parks offer a variety of court facilities, including basketball, handball, tennis, bocce, and volleyball courts.



The plague of the missing net

Drinking Fountains: 75

2010 score: 64

The drinking fountains score evaluates each discrete drinking fountain.

The good news is that drinking fountains improved by 11 points, with fewer fountains automatically failing for serious structural or hygiene issues. The bad news is that drinking fountains were the lowest-performing feature in our survey for the second year. In the 2012 survey, many fountains suffered from structural damage, insufficient pressure, or unsanitary conditions. Eleven percent of fountains could not be turned off or were continually leaking water from the body of the fountain.



Field surveyors tested the water pressure of every drinking fountain in every park zone in our survey.



6% of the fountains in our survey were completely inoperable.

Lawns: 87

2010 score: 69

The lawns score evaluates lawns, landscaped areas, and gardens. This score also evaluates trees contained on lawns.

Lawns showed the greatest improvement from 2010 to 2012. Ninety percent of the parks in our survey received higher lawn scores in 2012 than 2010. While nearly 40% of lawns surveyed in 2010 had unacceptable weed and grass coverage, the problem plagued fewer than 20% of lawns surveyed in 2012. However, weeds, bare spots, and overgrown grass are persistent challenges and were the most common failing aspects of lawns in our 2010 and 2012 surveys.



Lawns in Juniper Valley Park received an A grade.



Lawn scores were penalized for weed growth over 8.5 inches, the width of a sheet of notebook paper.

Natural Areas: 91

2010 score: 87

The natural areas score evaluates spaces that retain some degree of wild nature, native ecosystems, and ecosystem processes, providing habitat for native plants and animals. These are non-manicured spaces such as wetlands, forests and meadows.

Natural areas can present a variety of challenges to the Parks Department. They are popular spots for illegal dumping and illicit activity, and they are often hard to access and maintain. Given those challenges, it is encouraging that the natural areas grade improved to an A-. Surveyors found few instances of large-scale dumping this year. The most common problem was invasive weeds, present in nearly one-quarter of the natural areas in our survey.



Surveyors encountered less litter in natural areas in 2012 compared to 2010.



Natural and man-made debris in Kissena Corridor East

Pathways: 87

2010 score: 92

The pathways score evaluates each type of walkway in a park, including asphalt, dirt, turf, pavers, brick and concrete. The pathways score encompasses benches along pathways, as well as fencing lining pathways.

Sixteen percent of asphalt pathways exhibited severe deterioration or presented raised or sunken trip hazards. Eleven percent of pathways had cracks that could present a trip hazard, and 13% had exposed tree roots. To be penalized for these conditions, pathways had to reach a threshold of problematic conditions across the total area of the pathway. Comprehensively addressing, and not simply patching, these pathway problems will require capital investment.



Pathways in Inwood Hill Park received an A grade.



Deteriorating asphalt was a common problem on park pathways.

Playgrounds: 90

2010 score: 91

The playgrounds score evaluates all playground areas and playground equipment.

Playgrounds received an overall A- score for the second time. It is encouraging to note that in over 100 playground evaluations, surveyors encountered only one instance of excessive litter, glass, and graffiti. Deteriorating or splitting safety surfacing was the most common problem in playgrounds, and chipping paint is an ongoing maintenance concern.



Playgrounds continue to perform well, receiving a citywide A- grade for the second year.



Deteriorating or splitting safety surfacing was the most common problem in playgrounds.

Sitting Areas: 95

2010 score: 90

The sitting areas score evaluates areas that contain a grouping of benches, picnic tables, chess tables, and other discrete areas for sitting, including barbeque areas.

Overall, surveyors found sitting areas to be clean and well maintained. The exception was barbeque areas, which contained charcoal debris in grills, on lawns, and at the base of trees, as well as overflowing trashcans and picnicking litter. The sitting areas score reflects mid-week conditions, as NY4P surveyors visit parks Tuesday through Thursday to provide time for cleanup after heavy weekend use.



Sitting areas received an A grade.



Sitting areas with picnicking venues were often littered with barbeque debris.

Trees: 90

2010 score: 92

The trees score evaluates trees contained within tree pits in the park. Trees on lawns are evaluated in the lawns score.

Forty percent of tree pits suffered from missing, displaced or deteriorating pavers. The most common concern was the presence of empty tree pits. These underutilized spaces were often overgrown with weeds and present a ripe opportunity to improve the aesthetic and environmental benefits of a park.



The condition of tree pit pavers is reflected in the trees score.



Tree pits with stumps and empty tree pits received failing grades.

Water Bodies: 83

2010 score: 92

The water bodies score evaluates inland water bodies (lakes, creeks, etc.) as well as shoreline areas along the harbor and rivers.

Surveyors noted very few cases of major dumping or debris within water bodies. More common was litter along the edges of water bodies—12% of parks were cited for substantial shoreline litter. The pathways surrounding the waterfront at MacNeil Park exhibited dangerous deterioration, and the Queensbridge Park waterfront was fenced off and inaccessible to park visitors.



Over 1/3 of the parks in our survey contain inland water bodies or shoreline.



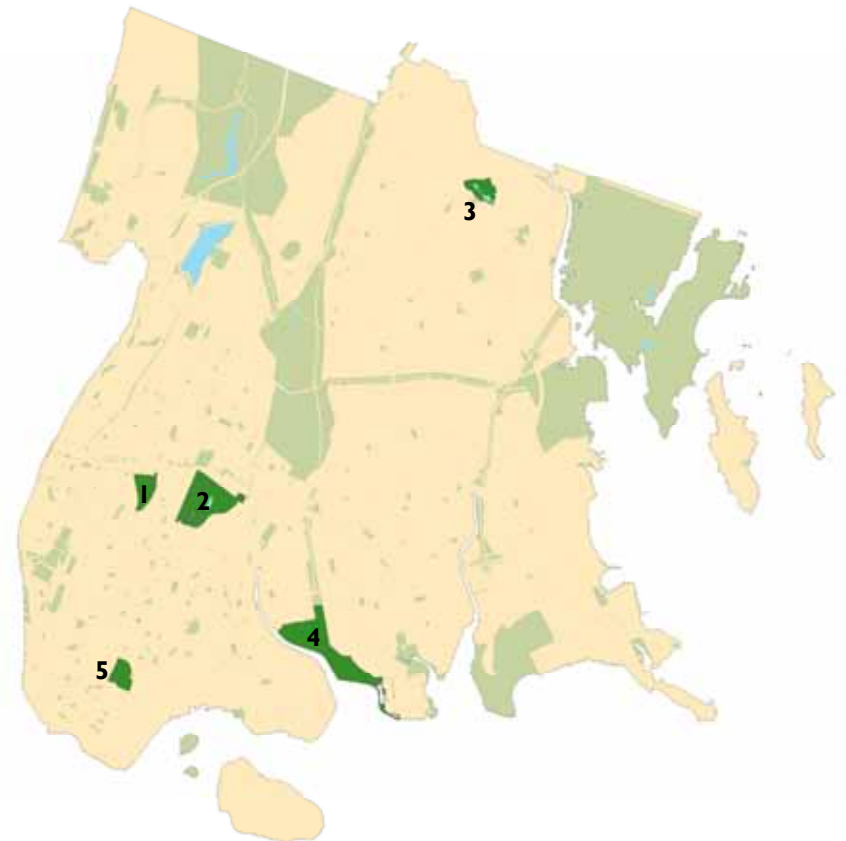
Water bodies were penalized for the presence of debris and litter.



THE BRONX

Average Bronx Park Score: 81

Park Name	Score	Grade	Neighborhood	Council District	Community Board	Acres
1 Claremont Park	85	B	Claremont & Mount Eden	14	4	39
2 Crotona Park	83	B	Bathgate, Claremont Village & Tremont	15	3	128
3 Seton Falls Park	75	C	Edenwald & Eastchester	12	12	36
4 Soundview Park	86	B	Soundview & Clason Point	18	9	205
5 St. Mary's Park	78	C+	Melrose & Mott Haven	17	1	35



Claremont Park: 85

Claremont & Mount Eden, Bronx
39 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	69
Bathrooms	84
Courts	92
Drinking Fountains	50
Lawns	69
Natural Areas	79
Pathways	90
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	85

2010 Park Score: 62

Claremont Park's large, rolling lawns and mature trees create a beautiful landscape suited for picnicking and long walks. The park also offers a small pool, playgrounds, and facilities for baseball, handball, and basketball.

Successes

In 2010 Claremont Park was the second-lowest-scoring park in our survey. Excessive litter detracted from the use and appearance of lawns, pathways, courts, and fields. In 2012 surveyors found a much-improved park, with less litter and better-maintained lawns. Since our last survey when we noted that the park lacked a dedicated advocacy group, residents have stepped forward to care for the park. In August 2012, NY4P held a clean-up day in collaboration with DPR, The Friends of Mt. Eden Malls & Claremont Park, and volunteers



Claremont Park Score improved 23 points from 2010 to 2012, in part thanks to an influx of volunteers.



Lawns score: 69

from Ernst & Young. NY4P surveyors spoke with park users who believe the park is improving, and those improvements are evident in the playgrounds, sitting areas, and trees scores, all of which earned perfect marks.

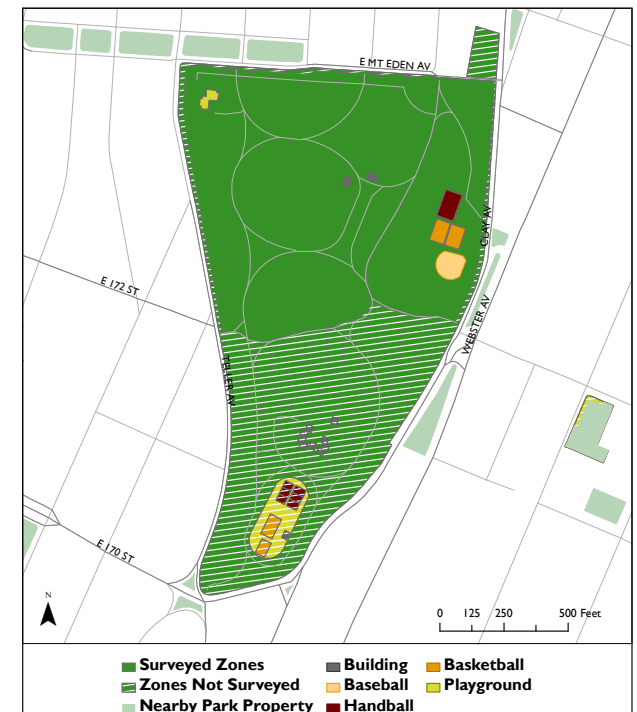
Challenges

Challenges remain, including broken drinking fountains and lawns that need ongoing reseeding, weeding, and stump removal.

"The low score in the 2010 Report [Card] gave us more incentive to focus on areas that needed improvement throughout the park. Taking that report to various community meetings, I think that helped us. We were able to show strong evidence for why Claremont Park needs more maintenance staff..."

"More volunteers must be recruited to continue to maintain Claremont Park. In 2012 alone, we had Ernst & Young, NY Cares, and Friends of Mt. Eden Malls & Claremont Park—we had many different groups that came out, with the support of the Bronx Parks staff, which really helped."

—Debra Myers, Friends of Mt. Eden Malls & Claremont Park



Crotona Park: 83

Bathgate, Claremont Village & Tremont, Bronx
128 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	87
Bathrooms	87
Courts	89
Drinking Fountains	71
Lawns	81
Natural Areas	85
Pathways	85
Playgrounds	85
Sitting Areas	88
Trees	53
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	83

2010 Park Score: 79

Crotona Park offers a wide variety of features, including a nature center, a lake and boat house, and the largest public pool in the Bronx. In addition to its 20 tennis courts, the park has basketball courts, baseball fields, and 11 playgrounds.

Successes

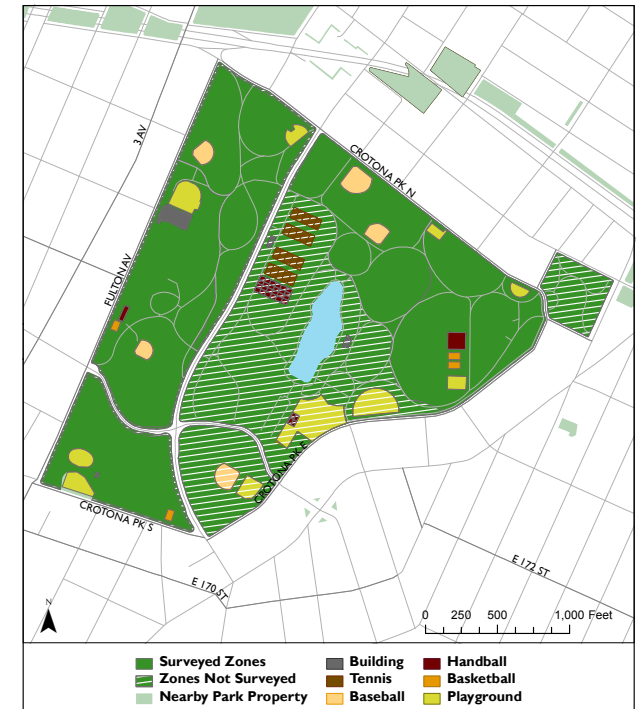
Lawns, fields and natural areas all improved dramatically since 2010, largely due to litter and debris clean-up. This improvement to groundskeeping contributed to the overall park grade increase from C+ to B.



Athletic fields score: 87



Trees score: 53



Challenges

Crotona Park received the lowest trees score in the survey, with a failing grade of 53. Surveyors encountered a number of empty tree pits, pits with stumps, misplaced pavers and weeds growing in both planted and empty pits. While drinking fountains improved between 2010 and 2012, they still received a C-, with one-quarter of the fountains broken.

Seton Falls Park: 75

Edenwald & Eastchester, Bronx
36 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	34
Natural Areas	50
Pathways	50
Playgrounds	86
Sitting Areas	86
Trees	-
Water Bodies	70
2012 Park Score	75

2010 Park Score: 94

Seton Falls Park is primarily composed of natural areas, including a large mature forest and wetlands. Beautiful paths and trails run throughout the forest and alongside streams.

Successes

Seton Falls continues to receive a drinking fountain score of 100.

Challenges

Seton Falls was the highest-scoring park in the *2011 Report Card on Large Parks*. This year the overall park score dropped dramatically, from an A to a C. The attractive natural landscape of the park presents a challenge to the maintenance and oversight of the park. Surveyors encountered broken glass, used condoms



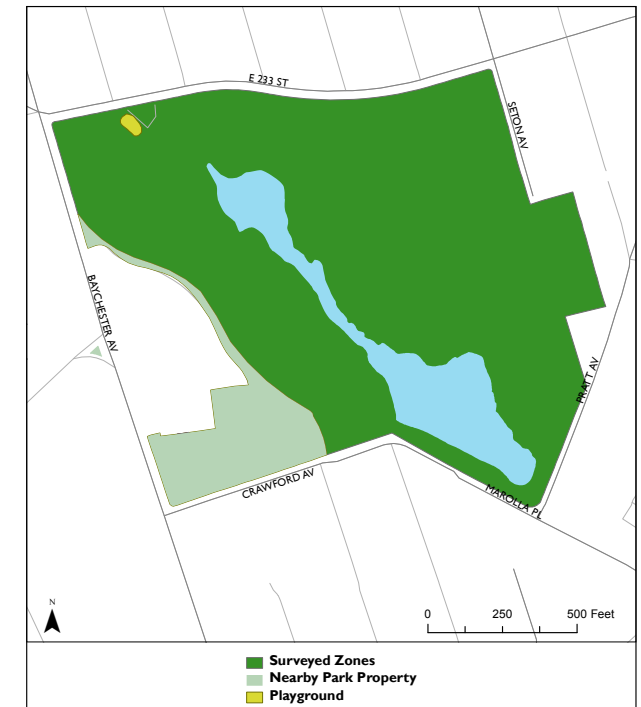
Natural areas score: 50



Graffiti contributed to the low natural areas score.

and drug paraphernalia along the interior pathways and within the natural areas of the park. Many of these items are automatic triggers to fail a feature because of their impact on the park experience. Park-user focus groups suggested that presence of excessive glass, condoms and drug paraphernalia must be addressed for a park to be safe and accommodating. Because survey

visits are a snapshot of a single point in time, we cannot say for sure whether this “illicit litter” is an anomaly, but the DPR PIP scores offer some corroboration of our assessment. In June and September 2012, the overall condition and cleanliness of PIP Zone 1 was “unacceptable,” with litter and glass specifically cited for unacceptable conditions. A July 2012 PIP assessment of Zone 2 was acceptable, while a February 2012 assessment of the zone found the overall condition and cleanliness to be “unacceptable.”



Soundview Park: 86

Soundview & Clason Point, Bronx
205 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	80
Bathrooms	63
Courts	86
Drinking Fountains	80
Lawns	92
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	96
Playgrounds	84
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	95
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	86

2010 Park Score: 81

Soundview Park is a waterfront park located at the confluence of the Bronx and East Rivers. Soundview is one of eight “regional destination” parks targeted for renovation and capital investment under PlaNYC. In June 2012, DPR broke ground on a \$15 million renovation including a new track facility with a turf field for year-round play, a playground, and an amphitheater. In November 2011, work began on a \$9.9 million restoration of the park’s wetlands, lagoons, and forests.

Successes

Existing recreational facilities and amenities, including courts, drinking fountains, and lawns, showed improvements since 2010. Lawns in particular improved by more than 20 points. Surveyors found no evidence of the downed tree limbs that plagued lawns



Playgrounds score: 84



While lawns received a 92, barbecue debris is a challenge throughout the park.

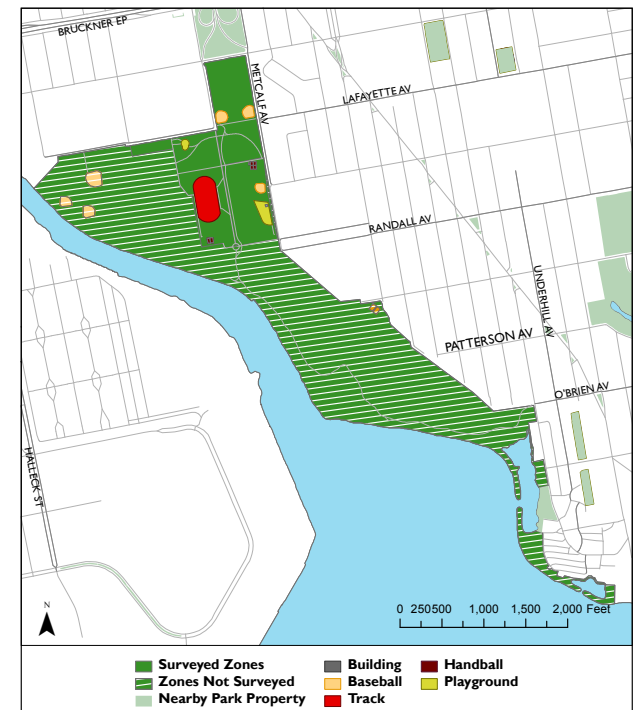
in 2010, and weeds, while still a problem, were less severe in 2012.

Challenges

New restroom facilities were clean and well-maintained; however, older restroom facilities were covered in graffiti, including hate speech. Older drinking fountains were in need of repair, and barbecue debris littered the lawns. Picnicking is a popular activity in the park, and DPR has attempted to restrict this activity to demarcated picnicking zones.

“A lot of people barbeque [in areas] it clearly says you’re not supposed to. I just think more enforcement of the rules might be the only [needed park improvement]. But the condition of the park is excellent. They’ve been doing a really good job. This place gets extremely dirty over the weekend with a lot of traffic, but Monday, Tuesday, it’s pristine again. I’m really, really satisfied.”

–Soundview Park visitor, August 8, 2012



St. Mary's Park: 78

Melrose & Mott Haven, Bronx
35 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	75
Bathrooms	-
Courts	0
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	63
Natural Areas	82
Pathways	63
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	-
Trees	89
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	78

2010 Park Score: 89

The largest park in the South Bronx, St. Mary's offers both bucolic scenery and active recreation. Park-goers can relax on benches along an allée of London plane trees, and a stroll up hillside paths takes visitors into a peaceful and secluded urban woods. St. Mary's Park also contains a track, handball and basketball courts, baseball fields, and playgrounds. The community center within the park offers recreational programs and an indoor pool.

Successes

The popular track and fitness station received an A grade, and drinking fountains scored 100 for the second year.



Lawns score: 63

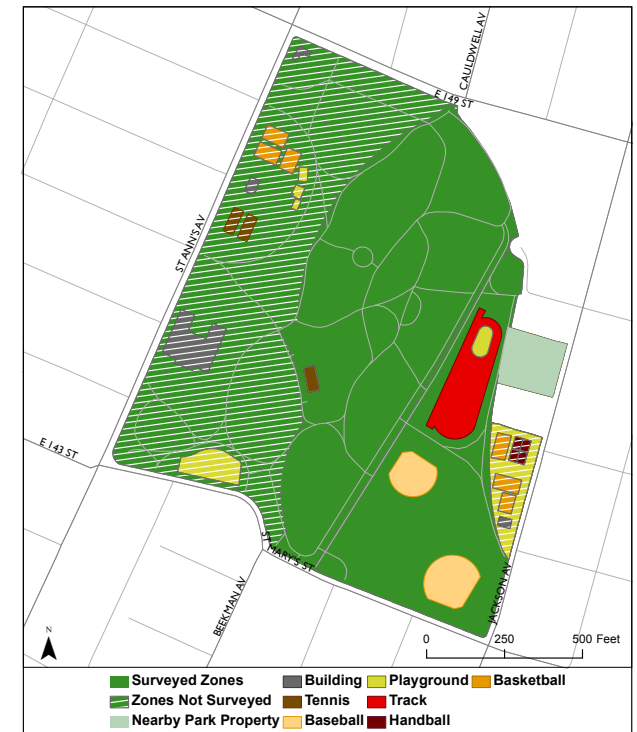


Pathways score: 63

Challenges

The topography that gives the park a sense of retreat also creates significant challenges for maintenance. Lawns on hills suffer from erosion and compromised tree root systems. This in turn creates muddy paths. Surveyors observed deteriorating asphalt paths throughout the park. Tree stumps littered lawns where unhealthy trees had been removed, although more unhealthy trees remained. The baseball fields are lined

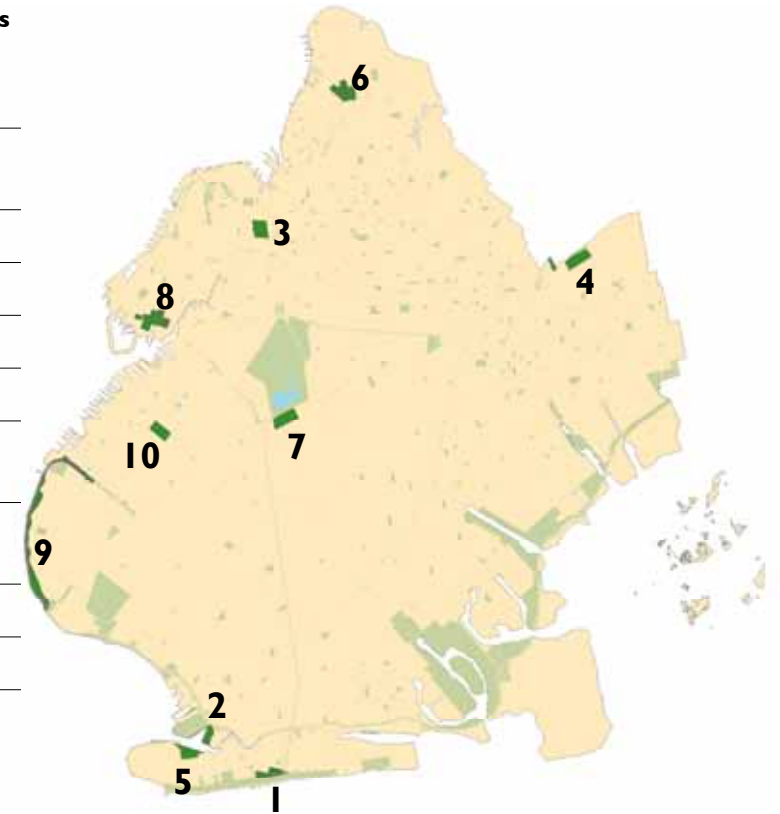
with seatless bleachers, and an asphalt tennis court is cracked and lacks a net, contributing to a court score of 0 and depressing the overall park score to a C+.



BROOKLYN

Average Brooklyn Park Score: 88

Park Name	Score	Grade	Neighborhood	Council District	Community Board	Acres
1 Asser Levy Park	86	B	Coney Island & West Brighton	47	13	21
2 Coney Island Boat Basin (Six Diamonds)	81	B-	Coney Island & Gravesend	47	13	37
3 Fort Greene Park	87	B+	Fort Greene	35	2	30
4 Highland Park	92	A-	Highland Park & Cypress Hills	37	5	44
5 Kaiser Park	86	B	Coney Island & Sea Gate	47	13	26
6 McCarren Park	89	B+	Williamsburg & Greenpoint	33	1	36
7 Parade Ground	88	B+	Prospect Park South & Windsor Terrace	40	14	40
8 Red Hook Recreation Area	90	A-	Red Hook	38	6	59
9 Shore Road Park	86	B	Bay Ridge	43, 38	10	58
10 Sunset Park	92	A-	Sunset Park	38	7	25





Shore Road Park, Brooklyn

Asser Levy Park: 86

Coney Island & West Brighton, Brooklyn
21 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	44
Courts	100
Drinking Fountains	91
Lawns	82
Natural Areas	90
Pathways	90
Playgrounds	93
Sitting Areas	98
Trees	78
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	86

2010 Park Score: 76

Situated just inland from Coney Island Beach and the New York Aquarium, Asser Levy Park contains lawns, handball courts, chess tables, and a playground. The park benefits from the stewardship efforts of Friends of Seaside Park.

Successes

In 2010, drinking fountains received a failing score of 0 for excessive algae growth and missing hardware. When our surveyors returned in 2012, they found the drinking fountains in working order. The sharp rise in the drinking fountain score helped boost the overall park grade from C to B. The popular handball courts continued to receive a perfect score.



Sitting areas score: 98



Lawns score: 82

Challenges

The conditions in Asser Levy Park bathrooms remain unacceptable again this year. The park received the lowest bathrooms score in the survey—44—and the only failing bathrooms grade. The conditions that we identified in 2010 have yet to be addressed, including stall doors that do not lock, a lack of running water, no toilet paper, and noticeably offensive odors.

These problems plague both the men's and women's restrooms. Surveyors found one women's restroom in which a bench was blocking half of the stalls, while two of five unobstructed stalls did not lock, and one toilet did not flush.

“You got the old guys playing chess over there, you got the kids in the park over there, you got people laying down in the grass, you got kids trying to skateboard over there... I think the park is just beautiful.”
—Asser Levy Park visitor, June 6, 2012



Coney Island Boat Basin (Six Diamonds): 81

Coney Island &
Gravesend, Brooklyn
37 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	81
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	80
Lawns	-
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	-
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	-
Trees	-
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	81

2010 Park Score: 56

Coney Island Boat Basin, also known as Six Diamonds after the park's primary recreational attraction of six baseball diamonds, showed one of the largest gains in park grade from 2010 to 2012. The fields are used by organized baseball and soccer leagues, as well as school athletic teams. The park contains lighting for night games.

Successes

The improvement in the park's overall score is driven entirely by a marked improvement in the drinking fountains score. With only two features, each contributes heavily to the overall park score. In 2010 every drinking fountain in the park was unusable. In 2012 this was the case for only one in six fountains.



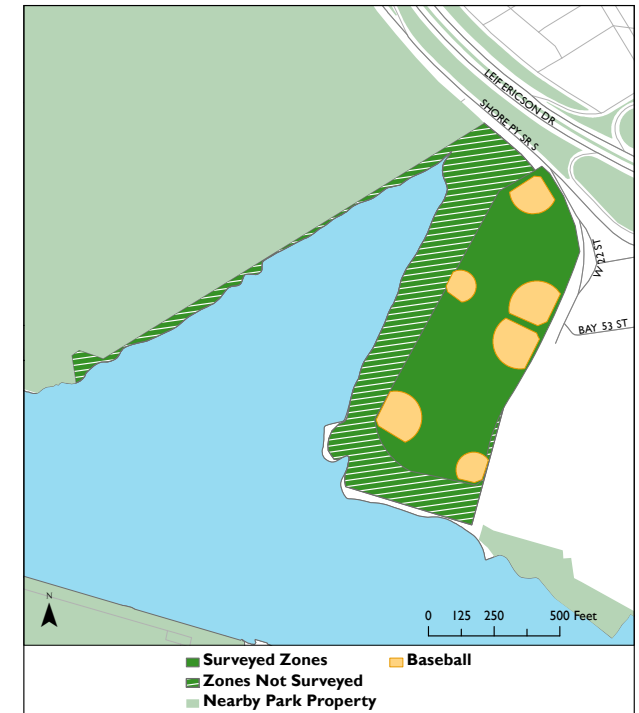
Drinking fountains score: 80



Athletic fields score: 81

Challenges

The heavy use of the athletic fields is apparent in uneven grading and bare patches on some fields. Litter continues to detract from the overall experience of the park. With just a few steps to improve fountain maintenance and landscape upkeep, the park could be a premier destination for team sports and recreation.



Fort Greene Park: 87

Fort Greene, Brooklyn
30 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	100
Courts	99
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	73
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	31
Playgrounds	96
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	78
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	87

2010 Park Score: 90

Fort Greene Park is a popular destination for activity and leisure. The park hosts concerts and other free programming sponsored by the Fort Greene Park Conservancy. The Conservancy has helped secure over \$7.5 million in funding for capital improvements, including planned renovations to the Willoughby Street entrance. The park has a long and storied history, transformed from the home of a Revolutionary War fort to the park we see today, envisioned by landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, and amended later by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White, whose work is seen in the design of the hilltop monument to prison ship martyrs.



Courts score: 99



Pathways score: 31

Successes

Tennis courts and playgrounds continue to be well maintained with scores of 99 and 100, respectively.

Challenges

Fort Greene Park's rolling lawns and hills, a topographical feature of Olmsted and Vaux's park plan, create considerable challenges for long-term park maintenance. Surveyors encountered exposed tree roots and

hillside erosion, and the structural integrity of the exterior retaining wall is being tested by time. The park is a tremendous neighborhood resource and a popular destination for multiple activities including off-leash dog hours, tennis, jogging, chess-playing, and barbecuing. Walkers and joggers have trod a barren "desire line" around the perimeter of the park, and in addition to roots and natural trip hazards, surveyors encountered unacceptable amounts of broken glass. This, in addition to severely deteriorating pathways in the northern portion of the park (see photos), led to a pathways score of 31, the lowest in the survey.



Highland Park: 92

Highland Park & Cypress Hills, Brooklyn
44 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	91
Bathrooms	94
Courts	85
Drinking Fountains	60
Lawns	85
Natural Areas	100
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	89
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	92

2010 Park Score: 88

Highland Park straddles the border of Brooklyn and Queens. Its elevated location provides views of surrounding neighborhoods and distant glimpses of the Atlantic Ocean off the Rockaways. The Brooklyn portion of the park offers extensive recreation facilities, including tennis, handball, and basketball courts, baseball fields, and playgrounds.

Successes

The lawns score improved dramatically from 2010, when the feature earned a 36 due to excessive weeds, litter, and bare spots. When surveyors returned in 2012 they found fewer examples of high weeds, bare lawns and excessive litter. Natural areas, pathways, playgrounds and sitting areas all received perfect scores.



Playgrounds score: 100



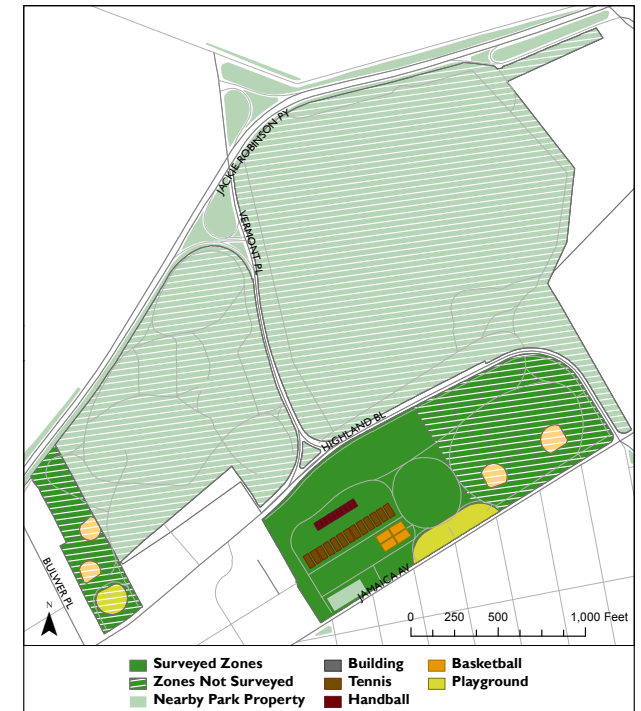
Lawns score: 85

Challenges

Two of five drinking fountains required plumbing maintenance.

“Handball, softball, sledding—I’ve done everything since I was 7-years-old. This is a wonderful park. I could recommend it for everyone and their families.”

—Highland Park visitor, July 6, 2012



Kaiser Park: 86

Coney Island & Sea Gate, Brooklyn
26 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	97
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	88
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	92
Trees	100
Water Bodies	0
2012 Park Score	86

2010 Park Score: n/a

When NY4P surveyors visited Kaiser Park in 2010, it failed with an overall park score of 57. However, in 2011, following \$4.5 million in capital investments from Mayor Bloomberg, Council Member Dominic M. Recchia, Jr., and Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, the park showed major improvement. The 2011 *Report Card on Large Parks* excluded the failing Kaiser grades because of ongoing construction and instead focused on the park as a model of how coordinated capital investment can turn around a park. With new basketball courts, recreational lighting, handball courts, drinking fountains, landscaping, and upgrades to the fitness area, Kaiser Park is now an attractive destination for recreation. The park, on the northern waterfront of Coney Island peninsula, also offers fishing, waterside pathways, and ocean views.

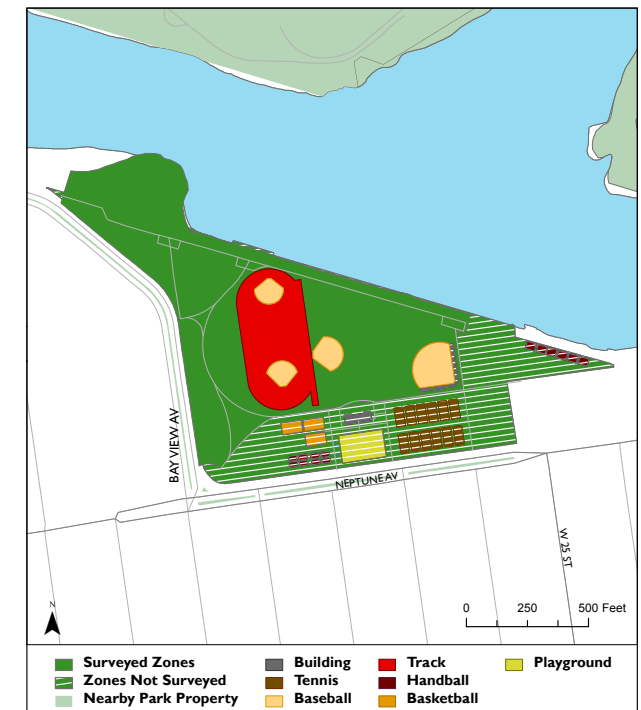


Sitting areas score: 92



Water bodies score: 0

of 0 for conditions that were severe enough to interfere with safe use. Surveyors encountered significant debris, including an abandoned boat that had washed ashore. The photo at left demonstrates both man-made and natural debris, revealing an otherwise beautiful landscape marred by excessive litter.



Successes

The athletic fields, drinking fountains, pathways and trees of Kaiser Park all received perfect scores.

Challenges

Kaiser Park offers gorgeous views of Gravesend Bay and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. However, the waterfront received a failing grade, triggering a score

McCarren Park: 89

Williamsburg & Greenpoint, Brooklyn
36 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	76
Bathrooms	84
Courts	97
Drinking Fountains	81
Lawns	74
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	88
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	89
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	89

2010 Park Score: 82

McCarren Park is the only large park serving Greenpoint, Williamsburg and East Williamsburg, and it is a major recreational destination for residents across north Brooklyn. The park offers a number of features including soccer and baseball fields; bocce, basketball, handball, and tennis courts; and a playground. The McCarren Park pool, one of 11 outdoor pools built by the federal Works Progress Administration, reopened to much fanfare in the summer of 2012 after sitting dormant for almost 30 years. While the pool falls outside of the *Report Card* survey scope, it attracts visitors to facilities throughout the park. McCarren Park benefits from maintenance and operations support, as well as programming, provided by the Open Space Alliance for North Brooklyn (OSA), a nonprofit partner of the Parks Department that cares for the parks and open spaces throughout Brooklyn Community Board 1.



Playgrounds score: 100



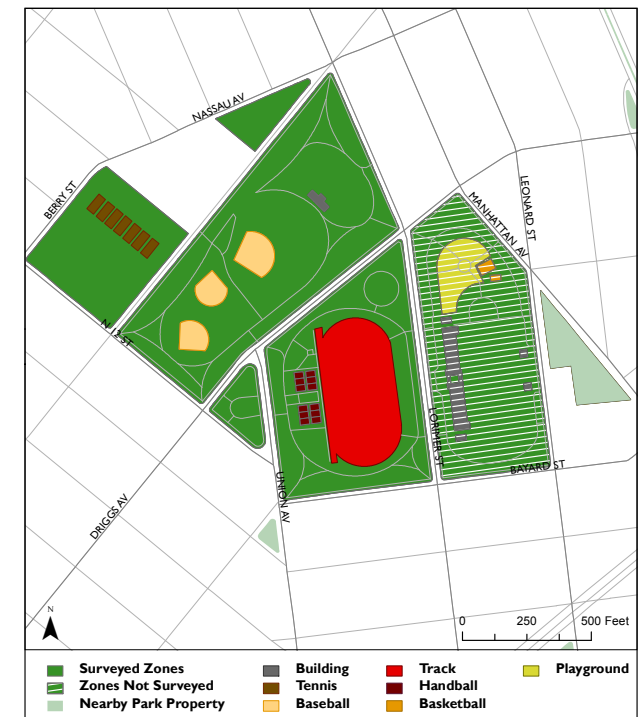
Athletic fields score: 76

Successes

An adult fitness station received a perfect score, and handball courts were well maintained. The drinking fountains score improved almost 50 points—leaking fountains and fountains with standing water have been fixed since our 2010 visit.

Challenges

McCarren Park is incredibly well used; some users complain that it is overused. The lawns and fields require constant seeding and reseeding. While the lawns score improved from 33 to 74, the low C grade reflects the continued presence of weeds, puddles, and bare patches of grass.



Parade Ground: 88

Prospect Park South & Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn
40 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	86
Bathrooms	96
Courts	70
Drinking Fountains	61
Lawns	63
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	88

2010 Park Score: 83

The Parade Ground sits at the southern border of Prospect Park and is managed by the Prospect Park Alliance, a nonprofit partner of the Parks Department. The Prospect Park Alliance undertakes private fundraising to support capital construction and improvements in the park; it stewards the natural areas, sponsors programming throughout the park, and works to restore the park to the original vision of Olmsted and Vaux. The Parade Ground athletic fields were rebuilt and reopened in 2004 thanks to a \$12.5 million refurbishment managed by the Alliance. Today, the Parade Ground is a destination for active recreation, including soccer, baseball, football, volleyball, and basketball.



Playgrounds score: 100



Courts score: 70

Successes

The Parade Ground playground received a perfect score, as did pathways, sitting areas and trees. Bathrooms improved over 60 points. The unsanitary conditions that surveyors encountered in 2010 had improved when surveyors returned in 2012.

Challenges

A volleyball court with severely puckering safety surfacing, pictured at left, detracted from the courts score. One of three drinking fountains in the survey zone required plumbing maintenance. The lawns score suffered from bare patches and excessive weed growth. Athletic fields see tremendous use, which is apparent in the heavy wear on portions of artificial turf surfacing.



Red Hook Recreation Area: 90

Red Hook, Brooklyn
59 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	64
Courts	94
Drinking Fountains	84
Lawns	93
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	97
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	97
Trees	89
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	90

2010 Park Score: 90

Red Hook Recreation Area is a destination for organized sports teams that use the park's soccer and baseball fields. The park offers other recreational amenities including a running track, basketball and handball courts, a pool and a recreation center. Team sports and food vendors attract fans and draw heavy weekend crowds.

Successes

Athletic fields and playgrounds received perfect scores, after having been faulted for uneven grading, trip hazards, and the poor condition of the bleachers in 2010. The high performance of the athletic fields in this year's survey is particularly notable given the high use and popularity of the fields.



Playgrounds score: 100

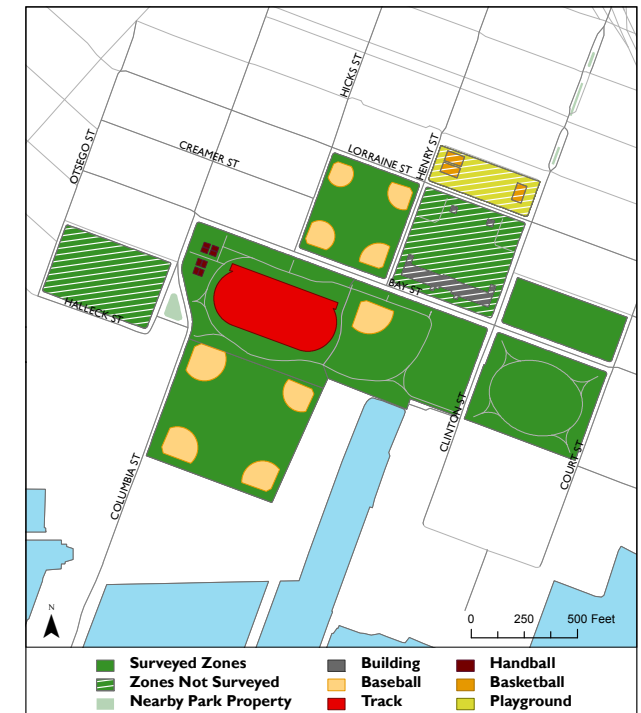


Red Hook Recreation Area is a popular destination for recreation and picnicking, and there are signs of heavy use throughout the park.

Challenges

The overall park score remained consistent from 2010 to 2012, with some features, such as athletic fields, showing improvement, and others, such as bathrooms, posting declines. In 2010, bathrooms scored a 100; in 2012, a 64. Surveyors encountered stalls that did not lock and trash on the bathroom floors. The women's bathroom lacked hand soap. The shift in high- and

low-performing features within the park points to the larger challenge of maintaining complex recreational facilities with a number of features.



Shore Road Park: 86

Bay Ridge, Brooklyn
58 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	55
Bathrooms	90
Courts	100
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	84
Natural Areas	72
Pathways	33
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	89
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	86

2010 Park Score: 80

Shore Road Park is a long, narrow waterfront park that runs along the western edge of Bay Ridge. Vantage points throughout the park provide clear views of the nearby Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. We spoke with park visitors who enjoy the breeze, views, and peaceful atmosphere in Shore Road Park. With pathways, gardens, and active recreation facilities, the park offers a range of activities for park-goers to enjoy, including basketball, handball, and tennis courts; playgrounds; dog runs; and a botanical garden. Shore Road Parks Conservancy raises private money for the park and advocates for park improvements.



Sitting areas score: 100



Pathways score: 33

Successes

Courts, drinking fountains, playgrounds and sitting areas all received perfect scores.

Challenges

The pathways score of 33 is the second-lowest pathways score in the report and reflects the deterioration, cracking, and weed-infestation of the asphalt path, particularly in the southern portion of the park.

Throughout the park, surveyors observed variation in maintenance and upkeep. Gardens and lawns were clean and manicured surrounding the Narrows Botanic Garden, but natural areas in the southern portion of the park were overgrown, extending onto pathways and creating an uninviting atmosphere. Ball fields, which were well tended, received a 55 because they were locked during daytime hours.



Sunset Park: 92

Sunset Park, Brooklyn
25 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	-
Courts	96
Drinking Fountains	86
Lawns	88
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	93
Sitting Areas	-
Trees	89
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	92

2010 Park Score: 90

Sunset Park, high atop a hill in the Brooklyn neighborhood of the same name, offers stunning views of the New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty, Lower Manhattan, and the Staten Island shoreline. A popular recreation center and pool offer a variety of programs. On a typical summer day in the park you can find dance groups, ping-pong players, swimming classes, a playground full of children, and neighbors gathered in sitting areas looking out over the neighborhood, city and water.

When we visited Sunset Park in the summer of 2012, portions of the park, including bathrooms, a sitting area, and courts, were under renovation. The area under construction was excluded from our survey assessment and accounts for the lack of bathrooms and sitting areas scores.



Spectacular views draw visitors to Sunset Park.



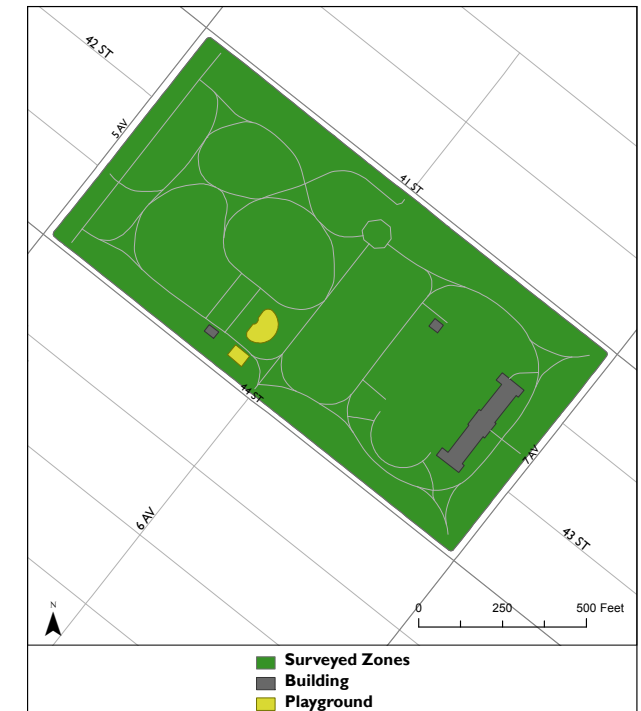
Lawns score: 88

Successes

Sunset Park received the highest park score among the ten Brooklyn parks in the 2012 *Report Card*.

Challenges

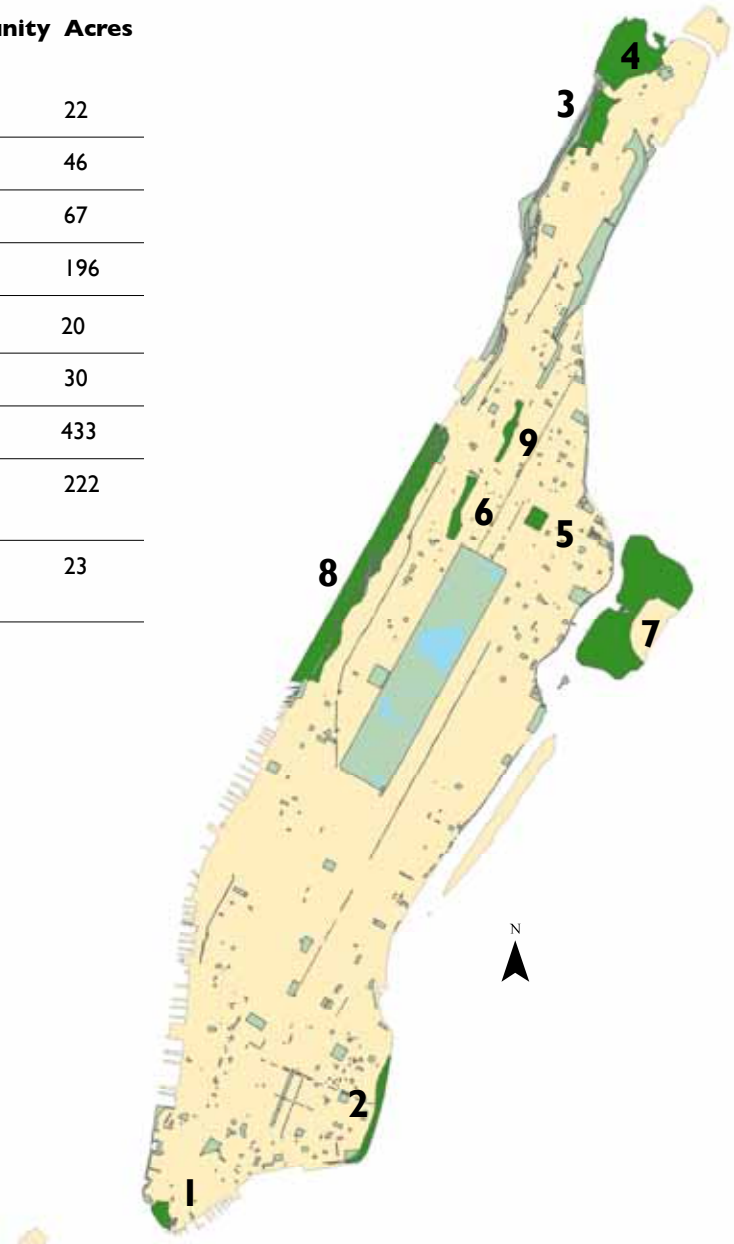
There were few serious maintenance issues in the park, with every feature receiving at least a B grade. However, the steepest lawns abutting the park's high retaining walls can be a challenge to mow and weed. Surveyors noted some lawns in need of weeding and litter pick-up, but the overall condition of the lawns earned a B+.



MANHATTAN

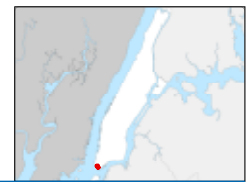
Average Manhattan Park Score: 87

Park Name	Score	Grade	Neighborhood	Council District	Community Board	Acres
1 Battery Park	89	B+	Financial District	1	1	22
2 East River Park	88	B+	East Village & Lower East Side	2	3	46
3 Fort Tryon Park	86	B	Washington Heights	7	12	67
4 Inwood Hill Park	94	A	Inwood	7	12	196
5 Marcus Garvey Park	91	A-	Harlem	9	11	20
6 Morningside Park	84	B	Harlem & Morningside Heights	9	9	30
7 Randall's Island Park	80	B-	Randall's Island	8	11	433
8 Riverside Park	92	A-	Upper West Side & Morningside Heights	6, 9	7, 9	222
9 St. Nicholas Park	77	C+	Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville & Harlem	7	9	23



Battery Park: 89

Financial District, Manhattan
22 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	94
Lawns	99
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	58
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	89
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	89

2010 Park Score: 92

Located at the tip of Lower Manhattan, Battery Park serves locals and tourists alike. It is the neighborhood park for the growing number of downtown residents, a lunchtime respite for nearby office workers, and the departure point for ferries to Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Battery Park benefits from the efforts of The Battery Conservancy, which raises private funds to support the maintenance, design, programming and protection of Battery Park as an important cultural and historic public space.

Successes

The waterfront, with panoramic views of the New York Harbor, received a perfect score, and the park comfortably accommodates visitors with well-tended sitting areas, drinking fountains, pathways and bathrooms. The manicured lawns, ornamental plantings, and gardens received a near-perfect score.



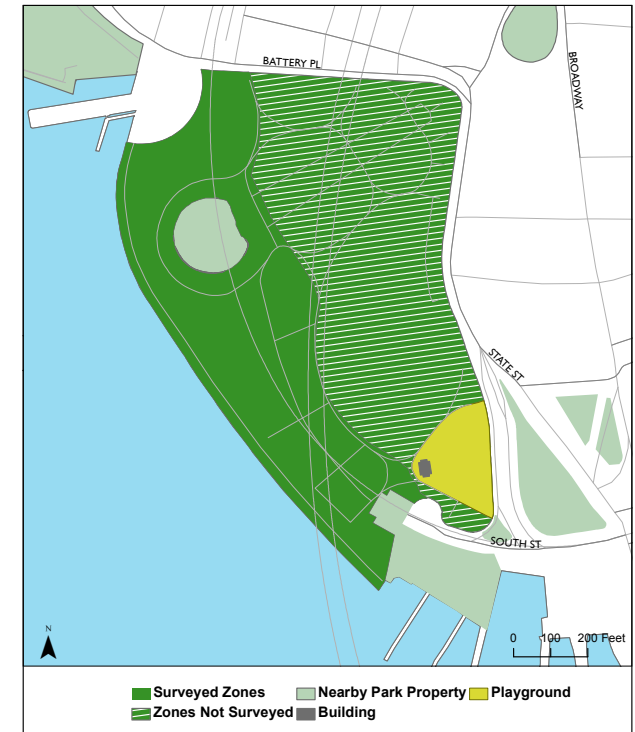
Lawns score: 99



Playgrounds score: 58

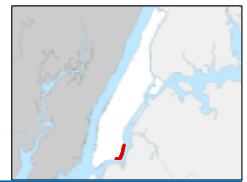
Challenges

The playground in Battery Park received a failing score and one of the lowest scores for playgrounds among the 43 parks in our report. The playground score decreased from 68 to 58 since 2010, due to persistent peeling paint on play equipment and aging, gap-laden safety surfacing.



East River Park: 88

East Village & Lower East Side, Manhattan
46 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	76
Bathrooms	91
Courts	89
Drinking Fountains	85
Lawns	87
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	92
Playgrounds	75
Sitting Areas	98
Trees	91
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	88

2010 Park Score: 85

East River Park serves the neighboring communities of the East Village and Lower East Side. It is also a destination park for organized sports teams and a passageway for walkers and bikers along the East River esplanade. The park benefits from the stewardship and educational outreach efforts of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Partnership for Parks.

Successes

The drinking fountains score increased by almost 20 points from 2010 to 2012, with fewer instances of structural degradation to the fountains and fewer leaking fountains. The lawns score increased from 65 to 87. In 2010 surveyors observed safety hazards including exposed circuitry on a lamppost and rebar trip hazards. These issues have been addressed, while general

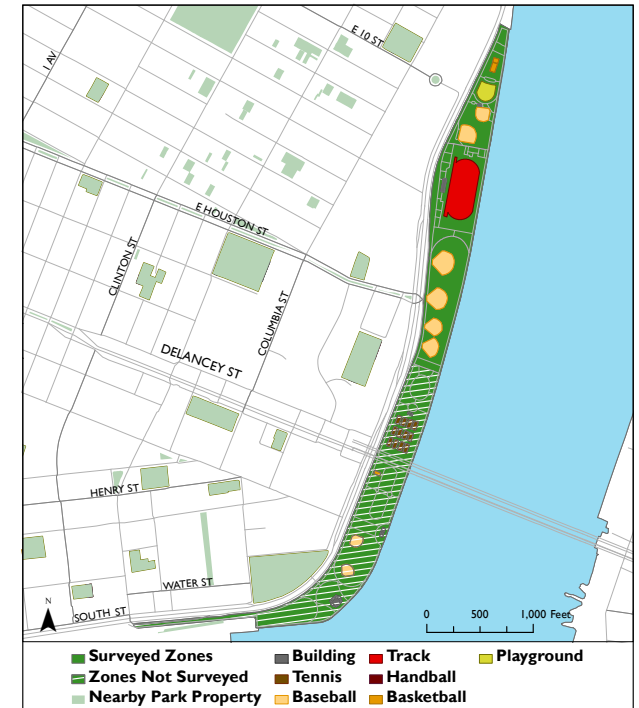


Sitting areas score: 98



Athletic fields score: 76

park-users who were concerned about the upkeep of the fields, which attract users from across the city. Deteriorating safety surfacing detracted from the playgrounds score.



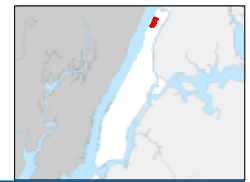
maintenance—such as seeding, weeding, and mowing—remains an ongoing challenge.

Challenges

The athletic fields score decreased by ten points since our visit in 2010. Care of grass ballfields is a continuing challenge—surveyors observed standing water and unevenly graded infields and outfields. We spoke with

Fort Tryon Park: 86

Washington Heights, Manhattan
67 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	46
Lawns	99
Natural Areas	100
Pathways	80
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	86

2010 Park Score: 79

Designed by Olmsted Brothers and donated to the City of New York by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., northern Manhattan's Fort Tryon Park offers extraordinary views of the Hudson River, and contains attractions such as the Heather Garden, Alpine Gardens, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art's medieval collection housed in The Cloisters. The park benefits from private fundraising undertaken by the Fort Tryon Park Trust, which supports park maintenance, capital investment, and programming.

Successes

Fort Tryon Park contained several perfect-scoring features, including natural areas, trees, and sitting areas. In 2010, surveyors observed damaged and graffiti-laden benches—these have been repaired and repainted, bringing the sitting areas score from 63 to 100. Lawns and landscaped areas received a score of 99, among the



Natural areas score: 100

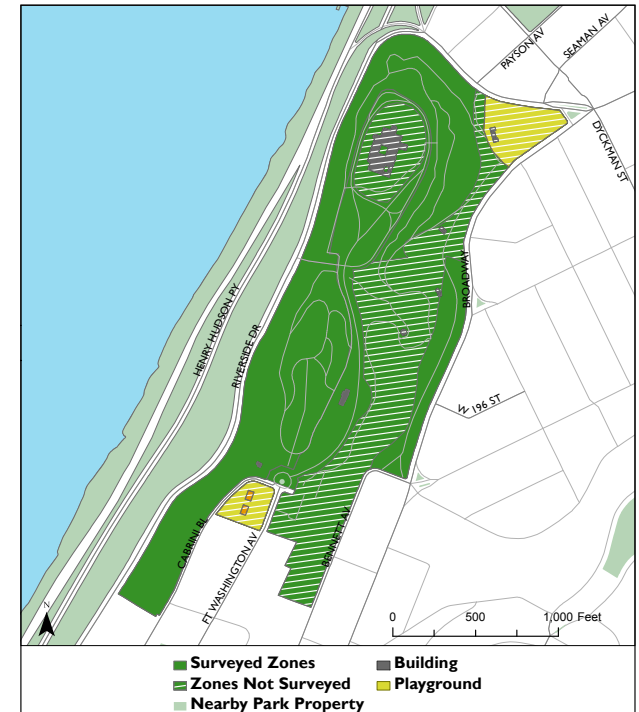


Drinking fountains score: 46

highest lawn scores in the survey. This reflects the great care that Parks staff and volunteers pay to the gardens and landscaped walkways throughout the park.

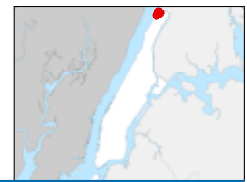
Challenges

Drinking fountains with missing spigots and pathways with uneven, cracking asphalt reduced the overall park score to a B. Park advocates who promote physical fitness in the park are particularly concerned about the safety of the pathways, a vital feature for active walkers and hikers.



Inwood Hill Park: 94

Inwood, Manhattan
196 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	87
Courts	100
Drinking Fountains	91
Lawns	93
Natural Areas	95
Pathways	97
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	94
Trees	89
Water Bodies	90
2012 Park Score	94

2010 Park Score: 78

Located on the northern tip of Manhattan, Inwood Hill Park has water on two sides and boasts spectacular views of the Hudson River, Palisades, and the Bronx. The varied topography of the park includes steep hills, natural areas, Manhattan's last remaining salt marsh, and a protected inlet for boating.

Successes

Inwood Hill Park posted one of the largest overall park score improvements between 2010 and 2012. In 2010, broken, leaking and mildewing drinking fountains detracted from the overall park score. In 2012, all fountains were in working order, and the drinking fountains score jumped from 14 to 91. Surveyors observed other improvements, including painted benches, new tennis courts, a well-maintained baseball field



Athletic fields score: 100

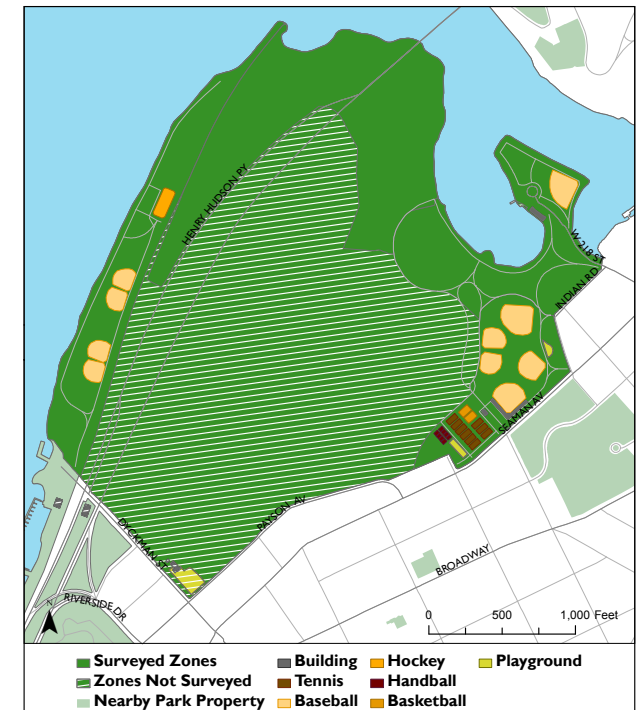


Trees score: 89

and freshly mowed lawns. Emerson Playground was in excellent condition and Indian Road Playground continues to benefit from the advocacy, clean-ups, and programming of the Friends of Indian Road Playground.

Challenges

The interior wooded zone of Inwood Hill Park fell outside of our survey boundaries, but this portion of the park, home to the only old-growth forest in Manhattan, poses safety concerns and maintenance challenges for path upkeep and tree care. Caring for this portion of the park is a continual challenge to which many park advocates are dedicated.



Marcus Garvey Park: 91

Harlem, Manhattan
20 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	89
Natural Areas	97
Pathways	55
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	93
Trees	85
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	91

2010 Park Score: 64

Located in Harlem, Marcus Garvey Park is a popular neighborhood destination that offers basketball courts, a baseball field, playgrounds, an outdoor pool, and an amphitheater.

Successes

Among the 43 parks in our survey, Marcus Garvey Park posted the largest increase in park score from 2010 to 2012. We visited Marcus Garvey Park on a day when park maintenance staff was out in full force picking up litter, mowing lawns, mending fences, and tending to plants. This attention is reflected in the fields score, which improved 20 points. Many problems that we identified in 2010 had been remedied, including broken benches in sitting areas and separating safety surfacing in the playgrounds.



View from the upper level terrace in Marcus Garvey Park

Challenges

The topography of Marcus Garvey Park creates structural challenges and makes the park hard to maintain. Paths and pavers leading to and lining the upper level are deteriorating. Local park advocates, including the Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association and the Marcus Garvey Park Alliance, are raising funds to repair the historic fire watchtower that sits on the upper terrace of the park. They are also organizing events to better integrate the upper level of the park into daily use, addressing concerns about illicit behavior through active programming.

“I really see our park changing because of the buy-in from the community. Everybody realizes that their contribution counts.”

—Syderia Chresfield-Asberry,
Mount Morris Park
Community Improvement Association

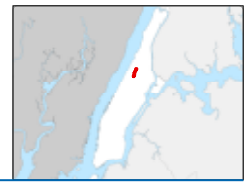
“To borrow a phrase, Marcus Garvey Park ‘is a many splendored thing.’ It has beautiful lawns, hillsides, a state of the art amphitheater and a mountaintop that is home to an historic fire watchtower. The Marcus Garvey Park Alliance seeks to attract the money and the volunteers needed to keep the park alive as a destination that people come to for their health and happiness.”

—Carla McIntosh, Marcus Garvey Park Alliance



Morningside Park: 84

Harlem & Morningside Heights, Manhattan
30 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	100
Courts	79
Drinking Fountains	67
Lawns	98
Natural Areas	86
Pathways	92
Playgrounds	64
Sitting Areas	90
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	84

2010 Park Score: 89

Morningside Park is a narrow park spanning 13 city blocks and bridging the neighborhoods of Morningside Heights and Central Harlem. Its steep, rocky cliffs and lush greenery make for a dramatic setting. The park offers playgrounds, basketball courts, and baseball fields.

Successes

The Friends of Morningside Park contribute to the programming and care of the park, and their work can be seen in areas such as lawns, which were weeded, landscaped, and free of litter. Morningside was one of only four parks to receive a perfect score for bathroom maintenance.



While playgrounds received a 64 for deteriorating safety surfacing, they remain a popular attraction



Playgrounds score: 64

Challenges

Morningside Park is one of four historic Harlem Parks. Like St. Nicholas and Jackie Robinson Parks to the north, Morningside Park is long and narrow with a steep escarpment separating lower level recreation from wooded overlooks. The natural area, running the length of the park along an outcropping of Manhattan schist, can be difficult to keep free of litter—surveyors observed an abandoned couch and clothing discarded in the woods. Playgrounds received a D grade, due to

separating and uneven safety surfacing. This contributed to the lower overall park score this year.

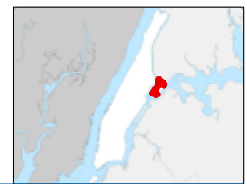
“Parks like ours need all the help they can get. As capital improvements continue to be made, significant funding challenges remain for overdue restoration and maintenance of existing facilities.”

—Brad Taylor, Friends of Morningside Park



Randall's Island Park: 80

Randall's Island, Manhattan
433 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	98
Bathrooms	93
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	67
Lawns	92
Natural Areas	97
Pathways	93
Playgrounds	33
Sitting Areas	87
Trees	100
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	80

2010 Park Score: 81*

*In 2010 Randall's Island Park and Wards Island Park were evaluated separately. In 2010 Randall's Island received an overall park score of 82; Wards received an overall park score of 81. In 2012 we revisited the same survey zones as 2010 but did not separate the parks since they are now considered one.

Randall's Island Park is a recreation destination located in the East River between Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx. It offers facilities for tennis, golf, soccer, baseball, and track and boasts extensive waterfront paths for biking and walking. The park is operated and maintained by the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA) (formerly Randall's Island Sports Foundation), a nonprofit partner of the Parks Department.

Successes

RIPA has invested heavily in the renovation of sports fields across the island. Today there are over 60 fields on Randall's Island, which surveyors found to be in



Bathrooms score: 93



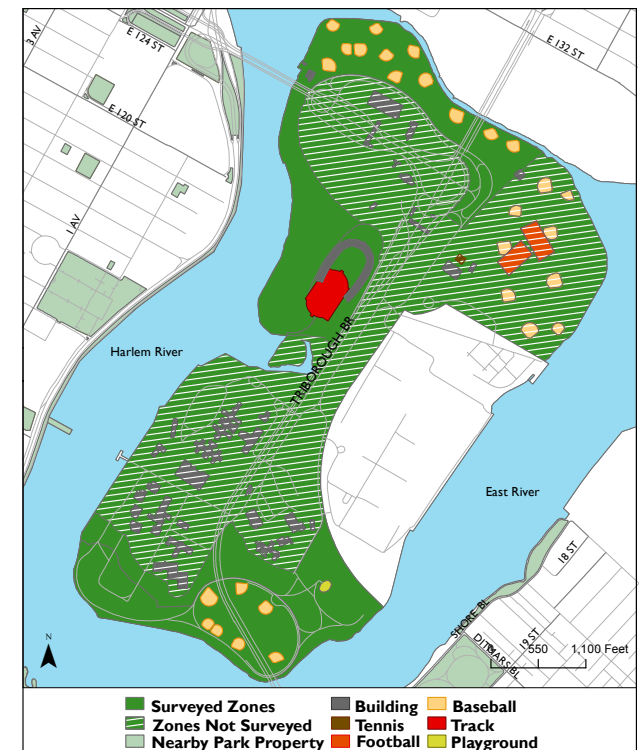
Playgrounds score: 33

excellent condition. Lawns and natural areas showed great improvement from our last visit, thanks to trash clean-up and weed removal.

Challenges

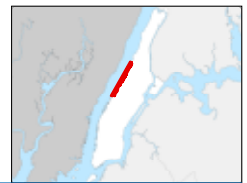
Scylla Playground received a grade of 33 due to deteriorating safety surfacing and jagged fence protrusions. Together with the low drinking fountains score, this contributed to the relatively low overall grade of the park. Randall's Island Park is one of only two large

parks within walking distance of East Harlem. While the park has wonderful amenities for organized sports teams, more attention should be paid to facilities such as playgrounds and sitting areas for the benefit of casual visitors. The good news is that renovations to Scylla Playground are on the horizon. According to RIPA, the playground "is in redesign and funded at \$500K for complete refurbishment by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. The playground is slated to be closed for renovation in the spring of 2013 and to reopen in the fall. The current play surface and equipment will be removed and new climbing equipment, swings and water play facilities geared to a range of ages will be installed."



Riverside Park: 92

Upper West Side & Morningside Heights, Manhattan
222 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	86
Courts	97
Drinking Fountains	68
Lawns	96
Natural Areas	97
Pathways	98
Playgrounds	99
Sitting Areas	92
Trees	96
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	92

2010 Park Score: 92

Riverside Park spans 57 city blocks, offering a range of amenities including cafés, piers, myriad recreational facilities, gardens, and a Forever Wild wooded natural area in the northern portion of the park. The park benefits from the stewardship of the Riverside Park Conservancy (formerly Riverside Park Fund), which oversees capital investments and park maintenance and operations. Riverside Park also has many dedicated volunteers and constituents who care for specific portions of the park, such as the wildflower garden and Hippo Playground. Volunteer-tended sites are marked with placards throughout the park.

Successes

It is notable that the courts and fields in Riverside Park, features in constant use and high demand, received A grades.



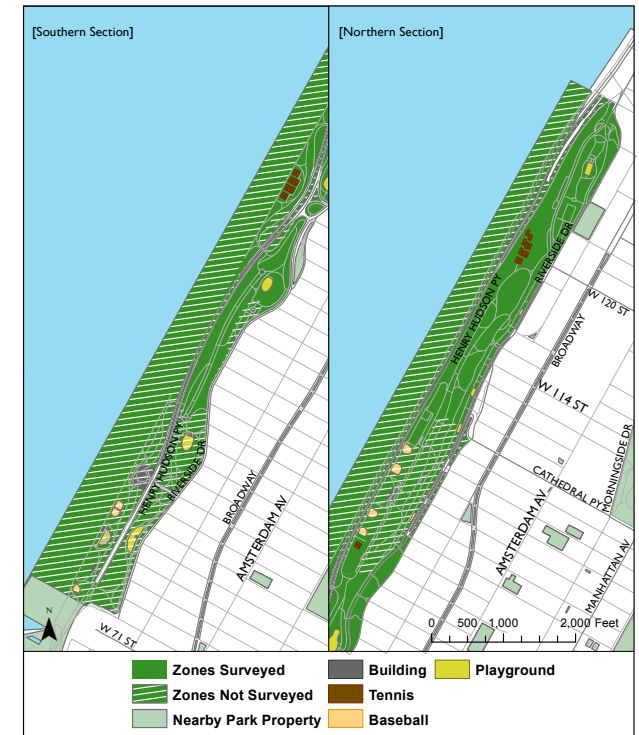
Athletic fields score: 100



Drinking fountains score: 68

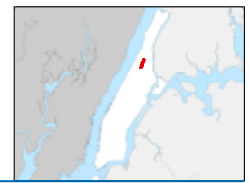
Challenges

Surveyors observed bathrooms with stalls that did not lock, and a men's bathroom with a missing toilet and a broken window. Drinking fountains received the lowest feature score in the park—one out of three fountains that we surveyed was clogged or leaking. This problem persists from our 2010 assessment.



St. Nicholas Park: 77

Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville & Harlem, Manhattan
23 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	94
Courts	72
Drinking Fountains	50
Lawns	68
Natural Areas	94
Pathways	45
Playgrounds	87
Sitting Areas	85
Trees	89
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	77

2010 Park Score: 88

In October 2011 Mayor Bloomberg planted a pin oak sapling in St. Nicholas Park to celebrate the 500,000th planting of the MillionTreesNYC campaign. The sapling adds to the verdant wooded hillsides that rise dramatically from St. Nicholas Avenue to the terrace above.

Successes

The upper level of the park, alongside The City College of New York campus, contains a well-maintained playground, basketball courts and sitting area.



Courts score: 72



Pathways score: 45

Challenges

Half of the drinking fountains in the park were out of service. Damaged fencing on the basketball courts along St. Nicholas Avenue hung precariously, and the debris from the fence created trip hazards on nearby lawns. Litter detracted from lawns and natural areas, and natural areas were scattered with man-made and natural debris and overgrown with invasive weeds. The park traverses a steep incline, and there are few

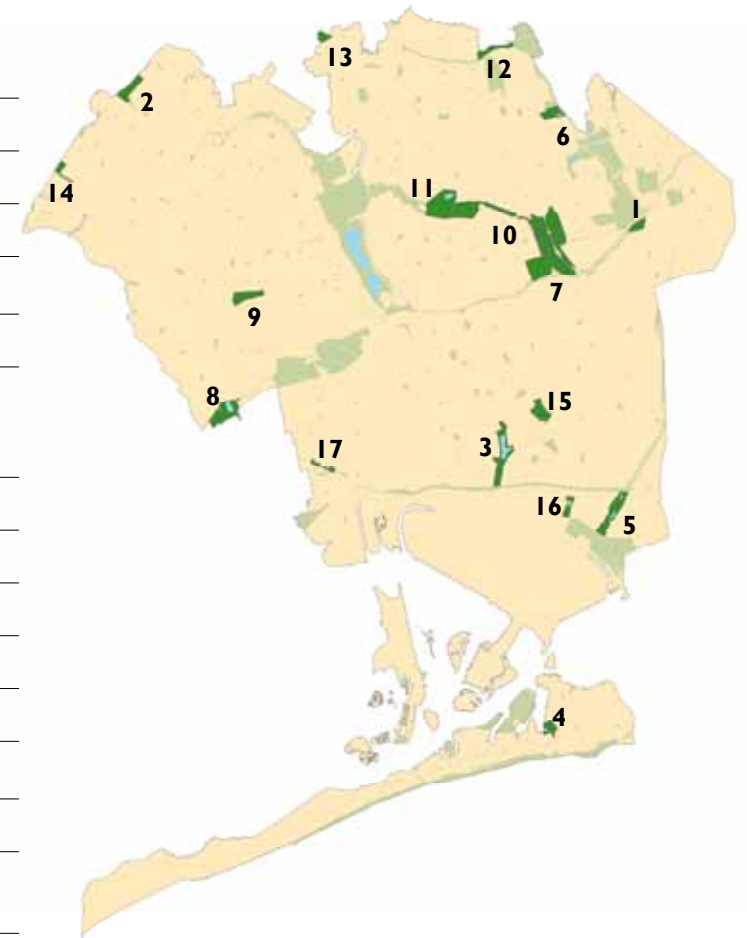
sightlines through the park. Movement through the park is diminished by a closed staircase in the southern portion of the park. This closure resulted in a failing pathways score. Combined with the prevalence of litter and weeds, this contributed to an overall park score of 77, among the lowest in our report.



QUEENS

Average Queens Park Score: 89

Park Name	Score	Grade	Neighborhood	Council District	Community Board	Acres
1 Alley Park Athletic Field	93	A	Oakland Gardens & Bellaire	23	13	31
2 Astoria Park	91	A-	Astoria	22	1	60
3 Baisley Pond Park	92	A-	Baisley Park & Rochdale	28	12	110
4 Bayswater Park	83	B	Bayswater & Edgemere	31	14	40
5 Brookville Park	89	B+	Brookville & Rosedale	31	13	90
6 Crocheron Park	96	A	Bayside	19	11	46
7 Cunningham Park	93	A	Fresh Meadows, Oakland Gardens, Jamaica Estates & Holliswood	23	8, 11	358
8 Highland Park	87	B+	Glendale	37	5	141
9 Juniper Valley Park	98	A+	Middle Village	30	5	56
10 Kissena Corridor East	91	A-	Auburndale	20, 23	8, 11	46
11 Kissena Park	86	B	East Flushing	20	7	237
12 Little Bay Park	97	A+	Fort Totten & Clearview	19	7	55
13 MacNeil Park	65	D	College Point	19	7	29
14 Queensbridge Park	79	C+	Long Island City	26	1, 2	20
15 Roy Wilkins Recreation Center	91	A-	St. Albans	27	12	57
16 Springfield Park	90	A-	Springfield Gardens	31	13	24
17 Tudor Park	95	A	Tudor Village	32	10	24





Alley Park Athletic Field: 93

Oakland Gardens & Bellaire, Queens
31 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	95
Bathrooms	90
Courts	92
Drinking Fountains	80
Lawns	98
Natural Areas	83
Pathways	89
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	93

2010 Park Score: 83

Alley Park Athletic Field is a recreational destination offering a variety of amenities including natural grass baseball diamonds, tennis and handball courts, as well as lawns and picnic areas. The Grand Central Parkway and Union Turnpike bisect the park, separating athletic facilities from wooded natural areas. Organized clubs, including the Alley Pond Pet Lovers and the Alley Pond Striders, promote active use of and care for the park.

Successes

Playgrounds, sitting areas and trees received perfect scores. Lawns earned a 98, among the highest in the survey and impressive given the multiple and active uses of the park.



Courts score: 92



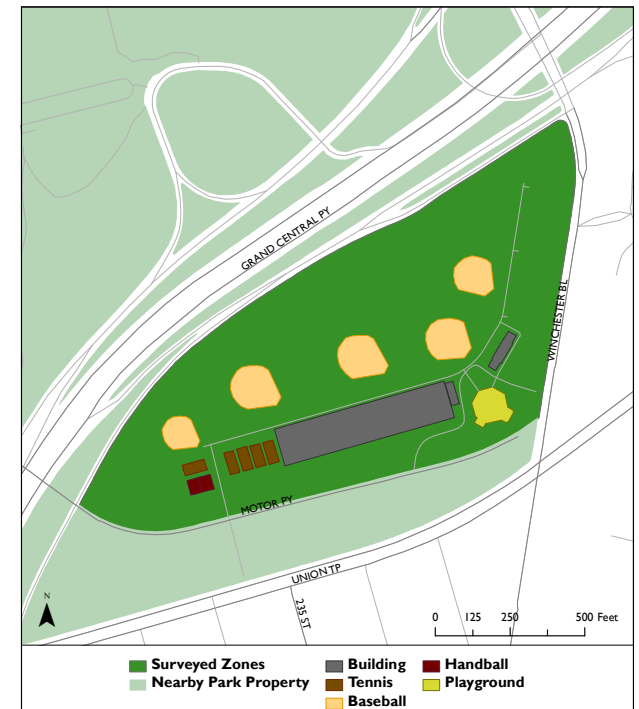
Natural areas score: 83

Challenges

Surveyors noted dangling tree branches and tree stumps in natural areas, which earned a score of 83. Drinking fountains were the lowest-performing feature in the park. However, with a score of 80, drinking fountains posted a 40-point improvement from the 2010 survey when fountains were plagued with mold. This large improvement contributed to the increase in overall score, from 83 in 2010 to 93 in 2012.

“The Alley Pond Pet Lovers adds to keeping the park safe and clean, and it enhances [the park] for people who want to come and enjoy it.”

—Judy Scuderi, park volunteer



Astoria Park: 91

Astoria, Queens
60 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	95
Courts	92
Drinking Fountains	33
Lawns	96
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	91

2010 Park Score: 90

Situated on the East River, Astoria Park is a bucolic waterfront park. The park benefits from the advocacy and volunteer efforts of the Astoria Park Alliance, which sponsors neighborhood festivals, park cleanups, and events such as fall leaf days, Mulchfest, and yoga classes.

Successes

A number of features in Astoria Park received perfect scores, including pathways, playgrounds, sitting areas, and trees.

Challenges

Drinking fountains, which decreased by 50 points from 2010 to 2012, were the lowest-scoring feature in Astoria Park. Two of the three fountains surveyed received automatic failing grades for plumbing prob-

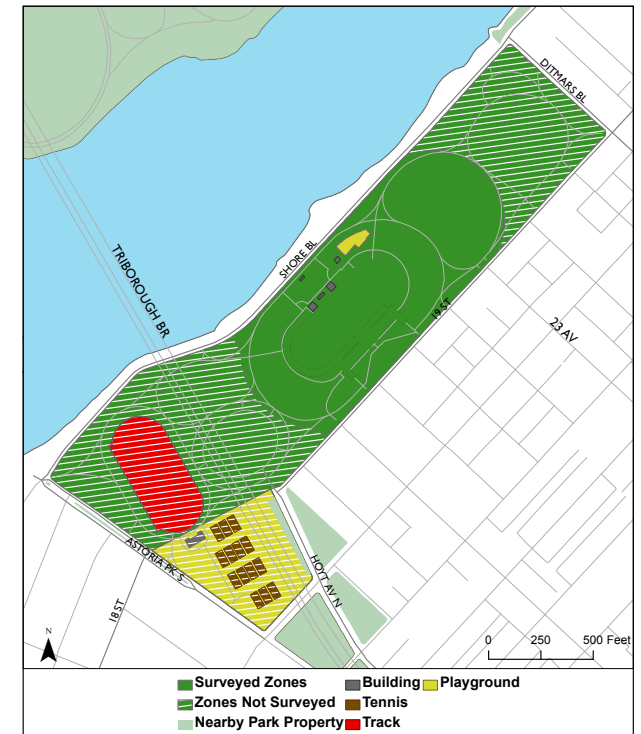


Lawns score: 96



Drinking fountains score: 33

lems. While our survey score does not account for the overall provision of drinking fountains, we spoke with park advocates who were concerned that there are not enough fountains to accommodate users throughout the park, making the maintenance of existing fountains all the more important.



“Flexible, ad hoc use is how people interact and enjoy their park. We’re trying to find ways that those ‘river of life’ uses are celebrated. That is why we advocate for open and green space. Amenities are wonderful, but they’re only really wonderful when we see that people are enjoying things and using them in many ways.”

—Martha Lopez-Gilpin, Astoria Park Alliance

Baisley Pond Park: 92

Baisley Park & Rochdale, Queens
110 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	92
Bathrooms	91
Courts	97
Drinking Fountains	87
Lawns	84
Natural Areas	93
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	86
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	78
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	92

2010 Park Score: 81

Baisley Pond Park provides facilities for a full range of activities, including football, soccer, cricket, baseball, handball, tennis, and barbecuing. The park also boasts a track and playgrounds. Baisley Pond Park benefits from the programming and stewardship efforts of the Baisley Pond Park Coalition.

Successes

Pathways and sitting areas received perfect scores. Well-used courts were also well maintained, receiving a score of 97. Lawns and natural areas showed marked improvements from 2010 and contributed to an 11-point increase in the overall park score.



Courts score: 97



Lawns score: 84

Challenges

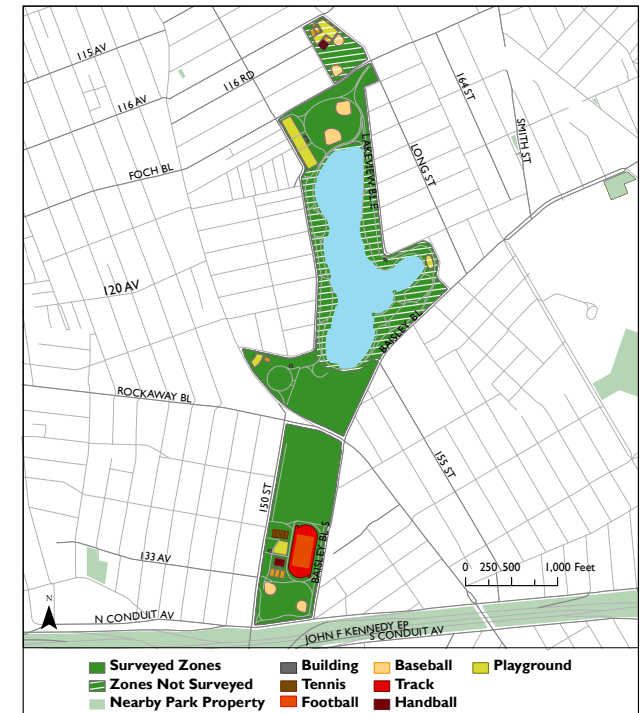
Trees were the lowest-scoring feature in Baisley Pond Park. Surveyors encountered misplaced pavers, weeds and empty tree pits.

“[The park] has improved. In the past, this area didn’t have benches, they didn’t have nothing. This is all new; maybe this year they finished upgrading this side of the park. It’s better.”

—Baisley Pond Park visitor, June 27, 2012

“It doesn’t even feel like you’re in Queens. It feels like you’re out of town. You know, it’s more laid back and isolated.”

—Baisley Pond Park visitor, June 27, 2012



Bayswater Park: 83

Bayswater & Edgemere, Queens
40 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	89
Bathrooms	98
Courts	67
Drinking Fountains	36
Lawns	97
Natural Areas	77
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	93
Trees	100
Water Bodies	0
2012 Park Score	83

2010 Park Score: 79

Located on the Rockaway Peninsula, Bayswater Park opens onto Jamaica Bay. A waterfront natural area is partially within the City's jurisdiction and partially owned by New York State. Park-goers can participate in extensive park programming and enjoy athletic fields, basketball courts, barbequing, and picnicking.

Successes

Bayswater Park was one of the low-scoring parks in our 2010 survey. This time surveyors found improved conditions in the bathrooms, lawns and sitting areas. The popular playground again received a perfect feature score, and trees were well maintained. The overall park score increased from C+ to B.

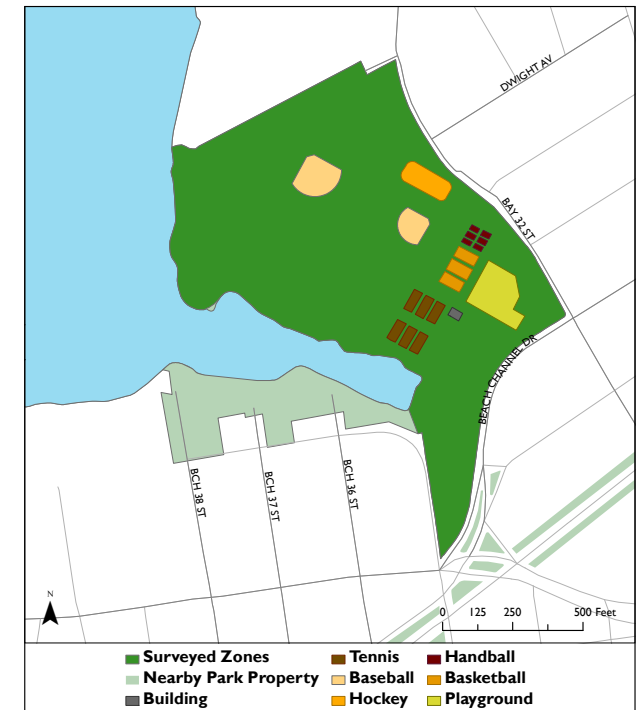


Playgrounds score: 100



Water bodies score: 0

ing along the park border, Bayswater, already a popular destination, could be even more welcoming and pleasant for park visitors.



Challenges

Some features lost ground, including courts and natural areas. Other low-scoring features, such as drinking fountains, continued to require maintenance improvements. Natural areas were penalized for excessive litter, as were water bodies, which received a failing grade of 0 for litter conditions that were so extensive they detracted from the use and quality of the space. With organized clean-up efforts and attention to landscap-

Brookville Park: 89

Brookville & Rosedale, Queens
90 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	90
Courts	97
Drinking Fountains	50
Lawns	75
Natural Areas	87
Pathways	95
Playgrounds	94
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	92
2012 Park Score	89

2010 Park Score: 92

Brookville Park in eastern Queens contains handball, bocce, and tennis courts; baseball fields; playgrounds; a path for biking; and areas for barbecuing.

Successes

Many features in Brookville Park received perfect scores, including athletic fields, sitting areas and trees. Features that performed well in 2010 continued to perform well in 2012.

Challenges

The overall park score decreased from 92 to 89 due to minor decreases in feature scores that were perfect in 2010: natural areas, pathways, and playgrounds. These features did not appear neglected—rather they are simply exhibiting signs of use and age, and the decline



Playgrounds score: 94

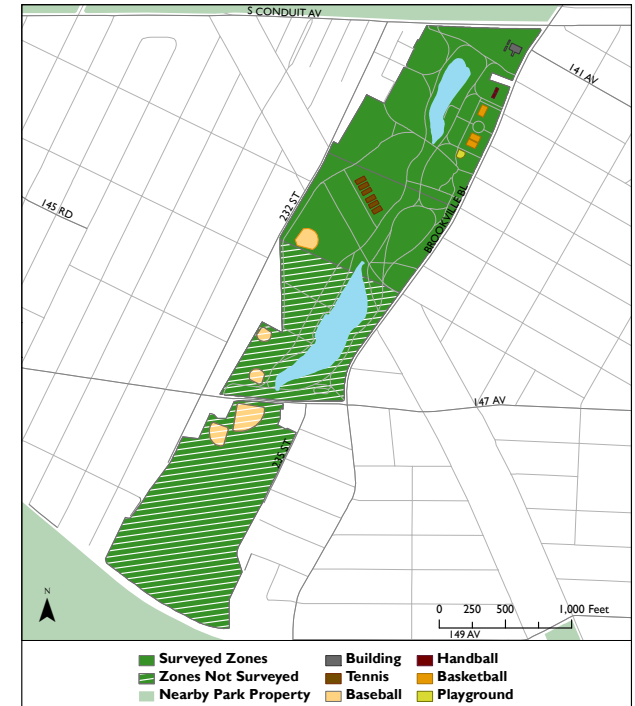


Lawns score: 75

in scores is a reminder that parks require constant ongoing maintenance. For example, surveyors noted deteriorating playground safety surfacing, a crucial playground component that has a functional lifespan.

Drinking fountains, the lowest-performing feature in Brookville Park, received a failing score of 50. Surveyors encountered a broken fountain and a fountain littered with water balloons and other debris. Over half

of the lawns in the survey zones suffered from extensive weed growth, which is reflected in the lawns score of 75, a C grade and the second-lowest score in the park. However, lawns have improved since 2010 when they received a failing grade of 57.



Crocheron Park: 96

Bayside, Queens
46 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	100
Courts	100
Drinking Fountains	67
Lawns	91
Natural Areas	100
Pathways	97
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	-
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	96

2010 Park Score: 90

Located on the shore of Little Neck Bay, Crocheron Park offers baseball fields, basketball and tennis courts, playgrounds, dog runs, and a pond.

Successes

Crocheron Park received an overall score of 96, one of the highest scores in the *Report Card*. It had the highest number of perfect-scoring features, with athletic fields, bathrooms, courts, natural areas, pathways, playgrounds, sitting areas and water bodies all receiving scores of 100. Lawns showed the greatest improvement since 2010, with a 40-point increase. Fewer lawns contained excessive weed growth and unmowed grass.



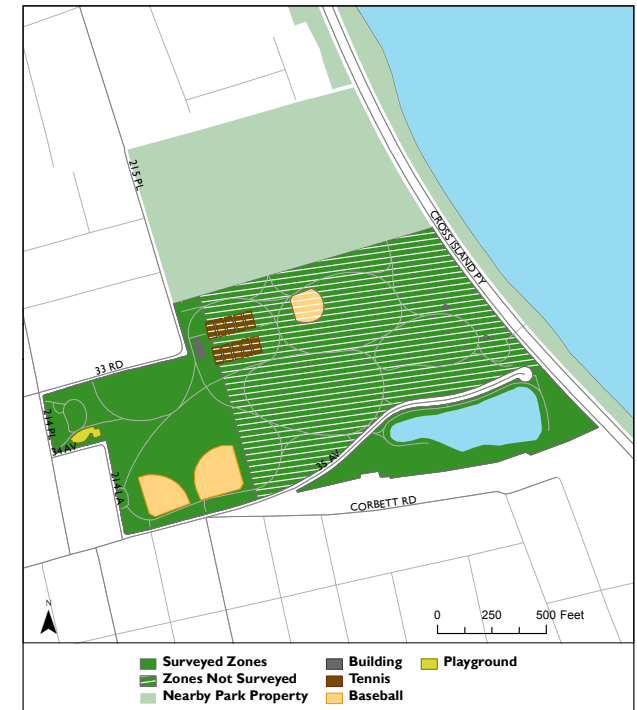
Playgrounds score: 100



Drinking fountains score: 67

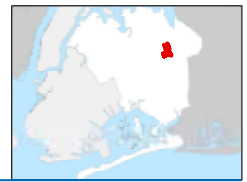
Challenges

Drinking fountains were the lowest-scoring feature in the park again this year. The score increased from 50 to 67, but problems persist, particularly a clogged fountain with standing water, pictured above.



Cunningham Park: 93

Fresh Meadows, Oakland Gardens,
Jamaica Estates & Holliswood, Queens
358 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	96
Bathrooms	95
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	74
Lawns	99
Natural Areas	100
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	-
Trees	78
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	93

2010 Park Score: 89

One of the largest parks in Queens, Cunningham Park offers a wide variety of recreational activities including basketball, bocce, tennis, volleyball, soccer, football, handball, and cricket. Park visitors can also enjoy mountain biking and walking trails. The park benefits from the advocacy and volunteer efforts of the West Cunningham Park Civic Association.

Successes

Natural areas and pathways received perfect scores. Natural grass baseball fields, the primary recreation feature in our survey zone, received an A grade of 96, impressive given the extensive use of the fields by teams from across the city. The lawns score of 99 places Cunningham Park among the top four parks in the 2012 survey for lawn care.



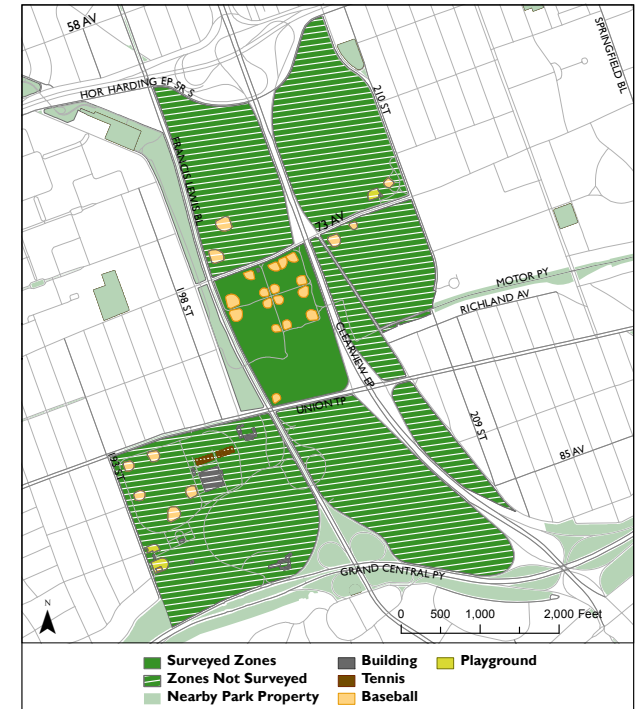
Athletic fields score: 96



Trees score: 78

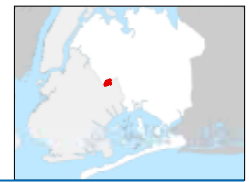
Challenges

Drinking fountains were the lowest-scoring feature in Cunningham Park. Three of twelve total fountains had maintenance issues that interfered with use. The trees score of 78 reflects pervasive weed growth in tree pits.



Highland Park: 87

Glendale, Queens
141 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	91
Courts	88
Drinking Fountains	86
Lawns	84
Natural Areas	100
Pathways	79
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	81
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	87

2010 Park Score: 85

Highland Park is home to Ridgewood Reservoir, an integral part of the city's water system for more than a century. Now decommissioned, the three reservoir basins have been left untouched and have filled with plants and trees, making the park a popular site for birders.

Successes

Athletic fields, natural areas, and trees in tree pits received perfect scores. Lawns demonstrated the greatest improvement from 2010 to 2012, with fewer bare and discolored patches of grass, less litter, and fewer damaged tree limbs. However, with a score of 84, there is still room for lawn improvement, particularly attention to weed growth and bare patches.



Bathrooms score: 91



Pathways score: 79

Challenges

Pathways were the lowest-scoring feature in Highland Park. Surveyors documented pathways with missing pieces of asphalt, uneven surfacing, and deteriorating surfacing. The picnicking portions of the sitting areas had large bare patches of dirt, charcoal and debris in the barbecue pits, and litter, including broken glass, on the ground. Surveyors also encountered charcoal debris in the grass surrounding the picnicking areas.



Juniper Valley Park: 98

Middle Village, Queens
56 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	96
Courts	98
Drinking Fountains	89
Lawns	96
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	98

2010 Park Score: 93

Juniper Valley Park offers vast lawns and tennis, handball, bocce, shuffleboard, and basketball courts. The park benefits from the maintenance and funding support of the Juniper Valley Civic Association.

Successes

Juniper Valley is the highest-scoring park in this *Report Card on Large Parks*, earning an A+ grade of 98 for its well-tended lawns and landscaped areas, evenly-graded ballfields, and bocce courts so clean that one park visitor joked he would eat off them. The lawns score improved by 23 points since 2010, when the hot dry summer caused patches of bare lawn throughout the park.



Lawns score: 96



Drinking fountains score: 89

Challenges

The lowest-scoring feature in Juniper Valley Park, drinking fountains, received a B+ grade. While the *Report Card* gives a perfect score to the maintenance of sitting areas, it does not account for the total provision of seating. Surveyors spoke with park visitors who brought chairs to the park because they felt that additional seating accommodations were needed.

“The tremendous advantage we have is a very active civic association and a great partnership between DPR, the civic, and the community.”

—Robert Holden, President,
Juniper Valley Civic Association

“We came because of the reputation. They have bocce ball tournaments here every year. It’s one of the best parks for bocce ball.”

—Juniper Valley Park visitor, May 29, 2012



Kissena Corridor East: 91

Auburndale, Queens
46 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	90
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	82
Lawns	97
Natural Areas	63
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	91

2010 Park Score: 90

Kissena Corridor East is a long, linear park that provides a green connection between Kissena Park and Cunningham Park. It features natural areas, ballfields, playgrounds, a bocce court, a community garden, and a bicycle path. The park benefits from the stewardship of the Friends of Kissena Park.

Successes

Sitting areas and trees received perfect scores. With a score of 97, the lawns in Kissena Corridor East were among the best maintained across the 43 parks in our survey.



Lawns score: 97



Natural areas score: 63

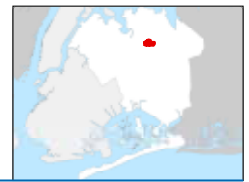


Challenges

The natural areas that run the length of the pathway through Kissena Corridor East present a maintenance challenge. Surveyors noted the presence of invasive species and untended natural debris. While many natural areas contain untended woodland and wild natural growth, the natural areas in Kissena Corridor East come in direct contact with a pathway used for active recreation, making stump and debris removal crucial for visitor safety.

Kissena Park: 86

East Flushing, Queens
237 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	90
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	72
Lawns	89
Natural Areas	89
Pathways	92
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	-
Trees	-
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	86

2010 Park Score: 87

Kissena Park provides a wide variety of passive and active recreational opportunities. The park benefits from the stewardship of the Friends of Kissena Park.

Successes

Athletic fields, lawns, natural areas and pathways all received A- or B+ grades. These park features were well maintained overall but required attention to small maintenance issues. For example, grass on the athletic fields had grown in patches of the infield. Pathways through the natural areas were impeded by fallen tree limbs.



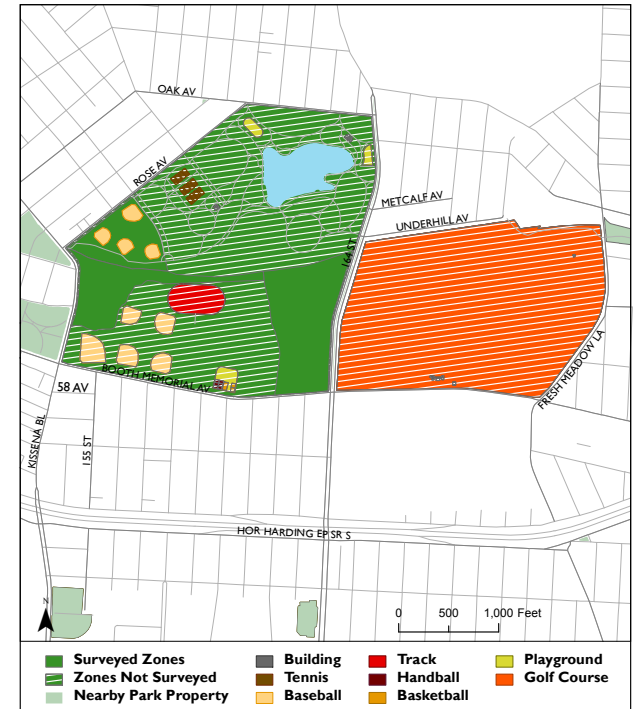
Athletic fields score: 90



Lawns scored 89. However, tree stump removal remains a concern.

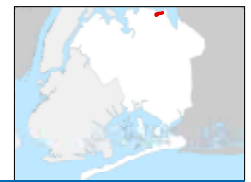
Challenges

Two of four drinking fountains in Kissena Park required plumbing maintenance, contributing to the drinking fountains score of 72.



Little Bay Park: 97

Fort Totten & Clearview, Queens
55 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	88
Bathrooms	93
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	100
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	-
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	97

2010 Park Score: 85

Little Bay Park provides scenic views of Little Bay and Throgs Neck Bridge. The park benefits from the stewardship efforts of Friends of Fort Totten Parks.

Successes

Little Bay Park contains a number of perfect-scoring features, including water bodies, lawns, pathways, and notably, drinking fountains. The waterfront park contains a popular pathway for strolling and cycling, and sitting areas with views of the bay. Surveyors encountered well-tended lawns free of litter and manicured landscaped areas throughout the park. The park score improved by 12 points between 2010 and 2012, in part due to plumbing upgrades to the drinking fountains, which increased by 50 points. The condition of lawns improved from 2010 to 2012 as well. The bathrooms score of 93 reflects the



Lawns score: 100



Athletic fields score (including asphalt rinks): 88



overall clean conditions of the portable toilets. The park currently does not contain permanent restroom facilities, but DPR expects to complete construction of new comfort stations by fall 2014.

Challenges

The uneven and cracking asphalt surfacing of the roller hockey rink remains a challenge. This is captured in the athletic fields score of 88.

MacNeil Park: 65

College Point, Queens
29 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	90
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	0
Lawns	80
Natural Areas	100
Pathways	59
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	-
Trees	-
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	65

2010 Park Score: 84

MacNeil Park, on a small promontory on the northern tip of Queens, provides waterfront views, athletic fields, hillside pathways, and a newly-refurbished playground and seating area. The park is a neighborhood resource, a popular destination for both active recreation and passive enjoyment, drawing everyone from young children to senior citizens into the park day and night. The Coastal Preservation Network, a local neighborhood nonprofit organization, organizes volunteer waterfront clean-ups, advocates for capital funding for waterfront pathway improvement, and promotes environmental education and remediation along the northern Queens waterfront.



MacNeil Park waterfront cleanup organized by Coastal Preservation Network
Photo credit: Coastal Preservation Network

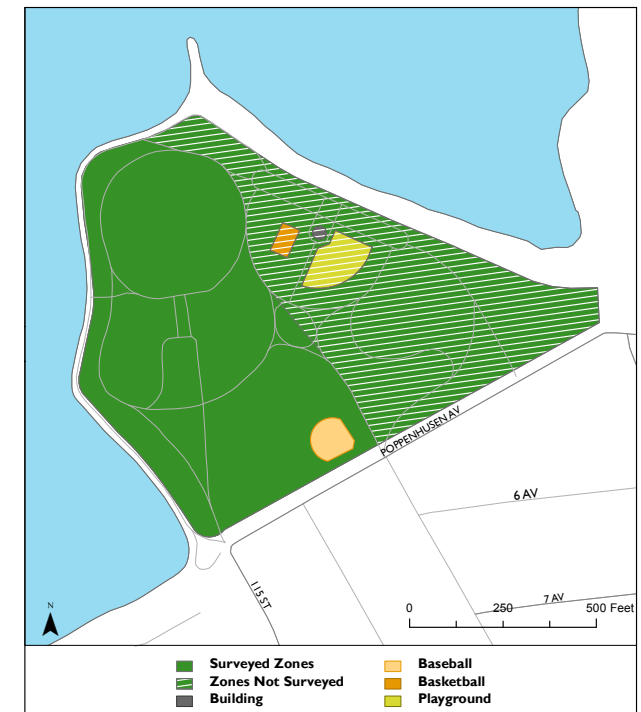


Dangerous sinkholes on the waterfront pathway

Challenges

MacNeil Park is the lowest-scoring park in the 2012 *Report Card*. While the eastern portion of the park features a new playground and clean restroom facilities, our randomly-selected survey zone in the western portion of the park contains several features that require maintenance attention. The overall park score was negatively impacted by the conditions of the pathways, particularly the waterfront pathway, which contains

dangerous sinkholes. While park visitors can walk along shaded hillsides through groves of mature trees, those pathways also showed signs of deterioration and presented trip hazards. The one drinking fountain in the zone was broken when surveyors visited in 2012, leading to the drinking fountains score of 0.



Queensbridge Park: 79

Long Island City, Queens
20 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	95
Bathrooms	98
Courts	86
Drinking Fountains	47
Lawns	93
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	91
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	82
Trees	-
Water Bodies	0
2012 Park Score	79

2010 Park Score: 84

Queensbridge Park offers a variety of recreational facilities, including baseball, soccer, and football fields; basketball, volleyball, and handball courts; playgrounds; and picnic areas. The park, situated along the East River beneath the Queensboro Bridge, offers views of Roosevelt Island and the east side of Manhattan. Queensbridge Park benefits from the stewardship of the Friends of Queensbridge Park.

Successes

Popular Vernon Playground received a perfect playground score. Queensbridge had among the highest-scoring bathrooms in the survey, which improved by 13 points from 2010 when surveyors found overflowing trashcans. Natural grass baseball fields were well maintained.



Athletic fields score: 95



Water bodies score: 0

Challenges

Drinking fountains received a failing score, and the 50-point decrease in the drinking fountains score from 2010 to 2012 contributed to the decrease in Queensbridge Park's overall park score. Three of four fountains were clogged or leaking. Water bodies, the lowest-scoring feature, received an automatic score of 0 for blocked access. While Queensbridge is a waterfront park with spectacular views of the East

River, park visitors are kept from the waterfront by an unsightly chain link fence featuring "No Trespassing" signs, and the condition of the waterfront esplanade appears unsafe for pedestrians (see photo).



Roy Wilkins Recreation Center: 91

St. Albans, Queens
57 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	100
Bathrooms	87
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	75
Natural Areas	91
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	-
Sitting Areas	85
Trees	-
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	91

2010 Park Score: 79

Roy Wilkins Recreation Center offers baseball and cricket fields; basketball, tennis, and handball courts; a track; a theater; community gardens; and a recreation center with an indoor pool. Southern Queens Park Association, a community-based nonprofit, serves as a park steward and sponsors events and programming throughout the park. The park also benefits from the efforts of the Friends of Roy Wilkins Park and active community gardeners who tend to a senior citizens' garden and a vegetable garden.

Successes

Roy Wilkins Recreation Center, one of the lowest-scoring parks in our 2010 survey, posted one of the largest overall park score improvements in 2012. Lawns and drinking fountains, both of which failed in 2010, increased by 25 and 50 points, respectively.



Pathways score: 100



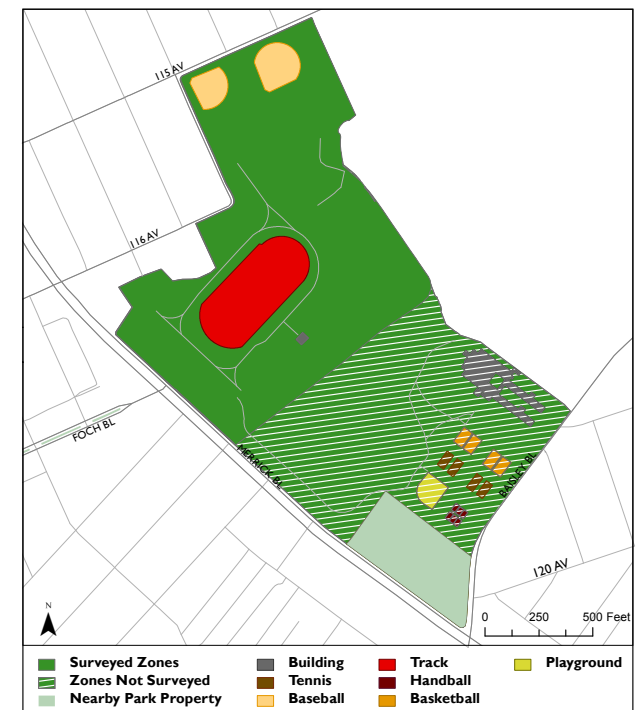
Lawns score: 75

Challenges

Lawns are still the lowest-scoring feature in the park and require constant weeding, seeding and attention. However, weeds and bare spots were less pronounced in 2012.

“Each gardener gets a plot; you grow whatever you wish to grow... These are baby lima beans. These are Roman string beans—Italian beans, we call them. I have a lot of marigolds over here. These are the tomatoes. I’m just getting started with my peppers.”

—Senior citizen gardener giving surveyors a tour of his garden plot, Roy Wilkins Recreation Center, June 27, 2012



Springfield Park: 90

Springfield Gardens, Queens
24 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	90
Bathrooms	92
Courts	67
Drinking Fountains	67
Lawns	84
Natural Areas	90
Pathways	100
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	93
Trees	89
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	90

2010 Park Score: 93

Springfield Park offers basketball and tennis courts, baseball fields, playgrounds, and a pond.

Successes

Springfield Park contains a number of high-scoring features, including pathways, playgrounds, and water bodies.

Challenges

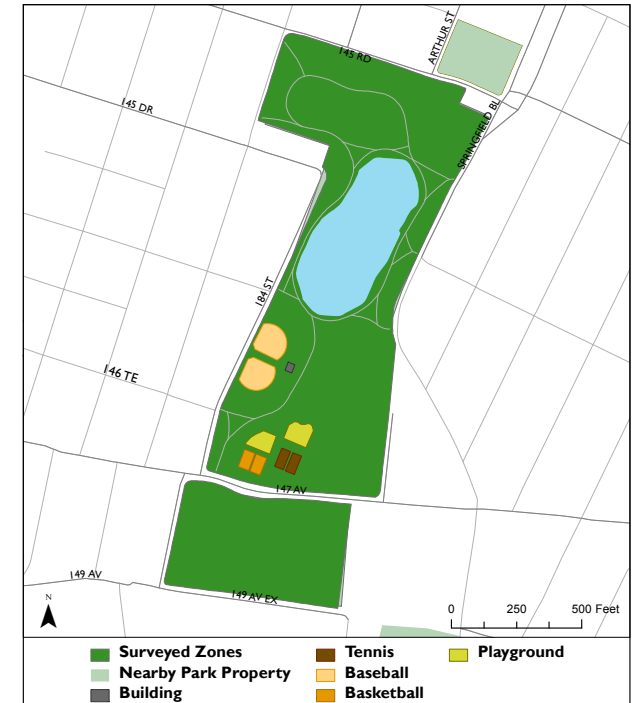
Courts and drinking fountains were the lowest-scoring features in Springfield Park and the features that demonstrated the largest decrease in score between 2010 and 2012. The courts score was impacted by a tennis court that was locked during daytime hours. The drinking fountains score was impacted by a fountain with a running leak.



Playgrounds score: 100



Drinking fountains score: 67



Tudor Park: 95

Tudor Village, Queens
24 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	94
Bathrooms	-
Courts	96
Drinking Fountains	95
Lawns	91
Natural Areas	-
Pathways	80
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	100
Water Bodies	-
2012 Park Score	95

2010 Park Score: 92

Tudor Park comprises two separate parcels along North Conduit Boulevard in southern Queens, just west of JFK Airport. The park features baseball fields, basketball and handball courts, a playground, and a horse stable.

Successes

Playgrounds, sitting areas, and trees received perfect scores for the second survey year. Drinking fountains improved from 2010 to 2012 after a leaking fountain was fixed; lawns improved, with fewer weedy and bare spots. These improvements contributed to the increase in the overall park score from an A- to an A.



Courts score: 96



Pathways score: 80

Challenges

Pathways were the lowest-scoring feature in Tudor Park; surveyors found portions of a pathway unpassable with mud and standing water.

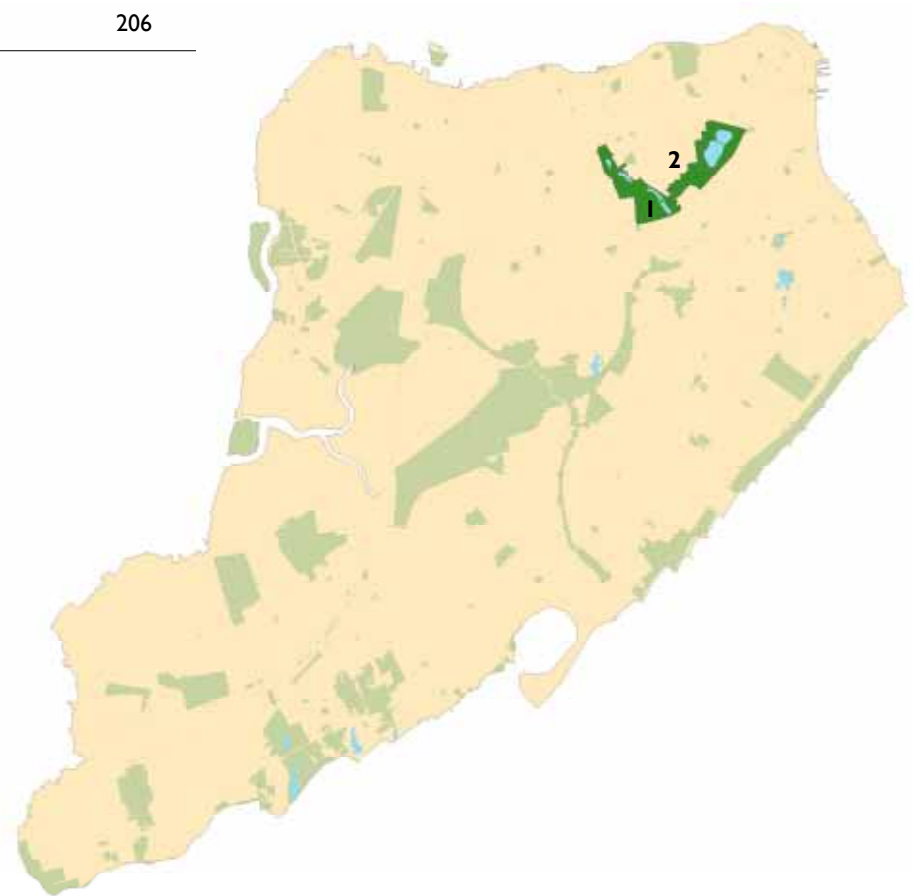




STATEN ISLAND

Average Staten Island Park Score: 95

Park Name	Score	Grade	Neighborhood	Council District	Community Board	Acres
1 Clove Lakes Park	95	A	West Brighton, Castleton Corners & Sunnyside	49	I	193
2 Silver Lake Park	95	A	Silver Lake & West Brighton	49	I	206





Silver Lake Park, Staten Island

Clove Lakes Park: 95

West Brighton, Castleton Corners & Sunnyside, Staten Island
193 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	-
Lawns	91
Natural Areas	96
Pathways	85
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	-
Trees	-
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	95

2010 Park Score: 93

Clove Lakes Park offers a variety of recreational and natural amenities. The park has facilities for baseball, football, soccer, basketball, ice skating, and children's play. A series of ponds connected by bubbling streams meanders through the center of the park.

Successes

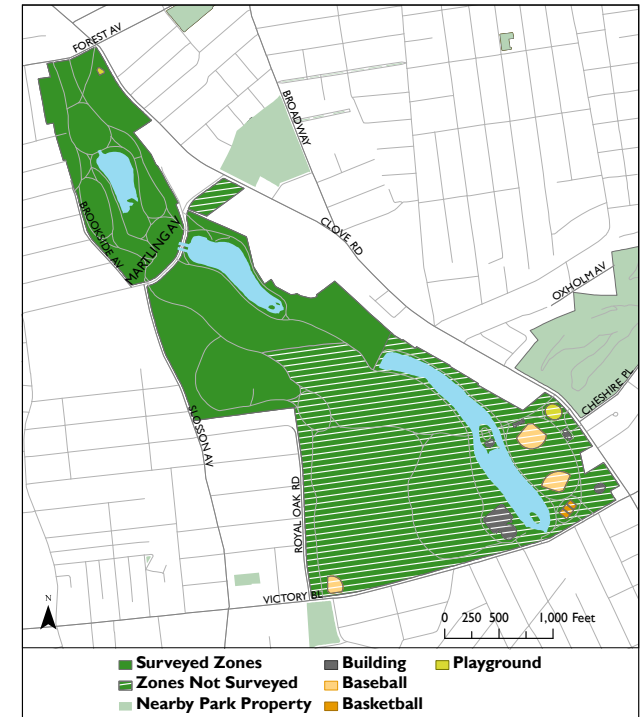
With an overall score of 95, Clove Lakes Park is among the highest-scoring parks in our survey. All survey features in the park scored at least a B, and playgrounds and water bodies received perfect feature scores. The natural areas score improved from a C+ to an A. Surveyors noted the presence of invasive species in some portions of the natural areas but did not find litter to be as great an issue as in 2010.



Water bodies score: 100



Pathways score: 85



Challenges

Surveyors found pathways throughout the park impacted by weed growth, with lawns merging into pathway boundaries in some areas.

Silver Lake Park: 95

Silver Lake & West Brighton, Staten Island
206 acres



Park Feature	Score
Athletic Fields	-
Bathrooms	-
Courts	-
Drinking Fountains	100
Lawns	84
Natural Areas	82
Pathways	89
Playgrounds	100
Sitting Areas	100
Trees	78
Water Bodies	100
2012 Park Score	95

2010 Park Score: 92

Silver Lake Park is home to a large, picturesque reservoir; a golf course; tennis courts; baseball, football, softball, and soccer fields; playgrounds; and trails for biking and walking. Fans of the park refer to it as “the Central Park of Staten Island.”

Successes

With an overall score of 95, Silver Lake Park is one of the highest-scoring parks in our survey. Drinking fountains received a perfect score, improving by 25 points between 2010 and 2012. Staten Island Borough President James Molinaro allocated \$1 million to fund the construction of two Staten Island playgrounds, including the Silver Lake Tot Lot, which was unveiled in the summer of 2011. The Tot Lot contains accessible swing sets, climbing equipment, and benches and tables to accommodate caretakers. Surveyors visited



Playgrounds score: 100



Lawns score: 84

the new playground for the first time in the summer of 2012, and this new recreational facility received a perfect score of 100.

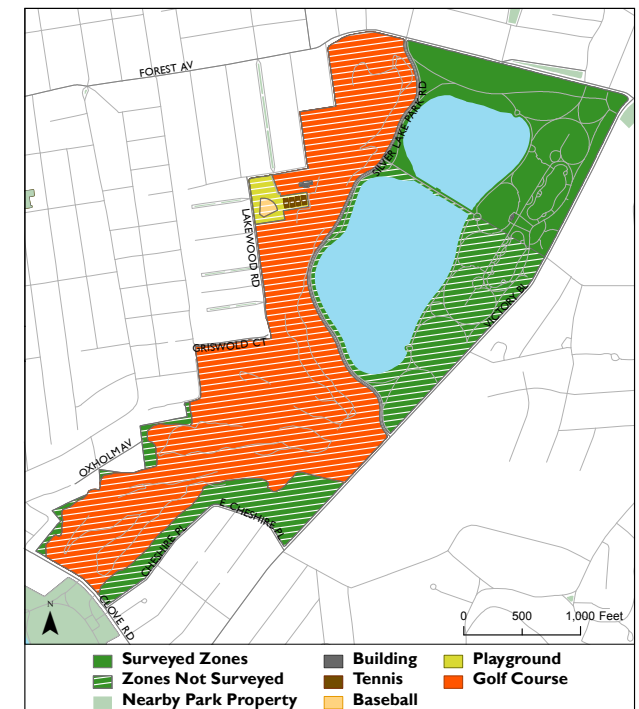
Challenges

The trees score of 78 was negatively impacted by the presence of weeds in tree pits. The natural areas score decreased by ten points, from 92 to 82, primarily due to mugwort overgrowth and the presence of broken glass. The performance of lawns was similar to 2010,

when we spoke with park advocates who noted the wear on lawns from multiple uses including ball and Frisbee playing, dog running, and picnicking.

“[The] view is so beautiful. It’s good for the mind. If you come to the park and you have issues, when you leave, you leave them here. It doesn’t go back home with you.”

—Silver Lake Park visitor, June 21, 2012



2012 Park Scores: Rank Order

Park Name	Borough	Score
Juniper Valley Park	Queens	98
Little Bay Park	Queens	97
Crocheron Park	Queens	96
Silver Lake Park	Staten Island	95
Tudor Park	Queens	95
Clove Lakes Park	Staten Island	95
Inwood Hill Park	Manhattan	94
Alley Park Athletic Field	Queens	93
Cunningham Park	Queens	93
Sunset Park	Brooklyn	92
Riverside Park	Manhattan	92
Highland Park (Bk)	Brooklyn	92
Baisley Pond Park	Queens	92
Kissena Corridor East	Queens	91
Marcus Garvey Park	Manhattan	91
Astoria Park	Queens	91
Roy Wilkins Recreation Center	Queens	91
Red Hook Recreation Area	Brooklyn	90
Springfield Park	Queens	90
McCarren Park	Brooklyn	89
Brookville Park	Queens	89
Battery Park	Manhattan	89

Park Name	Borough	Score
Parade Ground	Brooklyn	88
East River Park	Manhattan	88
Highland Park (Qn)	Queens	87
Fort Greene Park	Brooklyn	87
Soundview Park	Bronx	86
Kissena Park	Queens	86
Fort Tryon	Manhattan	86
Asser Levy Park	Brooklyn	86
Kaiser Park	Brooklyn	86
Shore Road Park	Brooklyn	86
Claremont Park	Bronx	85
Morningside Park	Manhattan	84
Crotona Park	Bronx	83
Bayswater Park	Queens	83
Coney Island Boat Basin (Six Diamonds)	Brooklyn	81
Randall's Island Park	Manhattan	80
Queensbridge Park	Queens	79
St. Mary's Park	Bronx	78
St. Nicholas Park	Manhattan	77
Seton Falls Park	Bronx	75
MacNeil Park	Queens	65
AVERAGE PARK SCORE		88



Riverside Park, Manhattan

New York City Parks after Hurricane Sandy

Assessing Damage and Re-opening Parks

In the days after Sandy, with the entire park system closed to the public, DPR staff undertook the immense task of inspecting nearly 2,000 park properties, with the goal of reopening as many as possible the weekend following the storm.⁴ New Yorkers felt the absence of the places where we play, exercise, gather with friends, and escape into nature.

The damage to parks across the city was extensive—nearly 650 downed trees in Central Park alone, and miles of boardwalk washed away on the Rockaway Peninsula. The volunteer response was just as strong and extraordinary. More than 3,800 volunteers helped out the weekend after the storm. According to DPR, “volunteers collected more than 14,000 bags of debris, filled dozens of truck beds, front end loaders and dump trucks, cut up broken tree limbs and large trees, removed debris from trees and raked up leaves and compost.”⁵ By mid-January the number of volunteers had nearly doubled, with Parks crediting 7,000 people, working at over 50 sites across the city, for the removal of nearly 23,000 bags of storm debris.⁶



Across the city volunteers helped remove 23,000 bags of storm debris. This cleanup took place at Queensbridge Park, Queens.

Large Parks Post-Sandy

New Yorkers for Parks staff visited over half of the large parks in our survey in the aftermath of the storm, and with a few exceptions along the waterfront, we found them to be in good shape despite fairly extensive tree and limb damage, which DPR was quick to begin addressing. On a trip to Brooklyn’s Sunset Park on November 6, 2012, we found raked lawns, clear pathways and no visible debris from damaged tree limbs. Flyers throughout the park announced a cleanup that had taken place earlier in the week (see photo). NY4P staff conducted a block-by-block survey of the parks and open spaces across the Coney Island Peninsula on November 9, creating a priority list of clean-up needs to help match volunteers to appropriate sites. Our survey work included visits to Asser Levy and Kaiser Parks. Kaiser’s waterfront was littered with debris. The force of the storm deposited debris throughout Asser Levy Park, which also suffered extensive damage to trees (see photos). While many parks will take months to fully recover, the good news is that at the time of this writing—January 2013—all 43 large parks have reopened to visitors.⁷

While immediate issues, such as the removal of downed trees and debris, have been addressed, we are only



A call for volunteers in Sunset Park, Brooklyn

beginning to assess the extent of other damage, such as the effect of salinized water on plant life in waterfront parks. And DPR is still assessing how to address other post-storm maintenance concerns. For example, what will become of the tree stumps left behind after the removal of downed trees? With an eviscerated stump removal budget, will the effects of the storm dot the park landscape for years to come? We applaud DPR for their quick response to the storm’s immediate cleanup needs, but equally important will be how the City addresses these and other longer term maintenance demands in parks, as well as how we reconceive park planning and design, bearing the lessons of Sandy in mind.

Table I: DPR Tree Removal 2008-2012

Performance Statistics	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12
Trees removed	12,833	11,378	13,216	14,117	16,248
Street trees removed (in response to service request)	8,095	7,261	8,161	8,935	8,688
% removed within 30 days of service request	98%	98%	99%	93%	94%

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/dpr.pdf>

Table 2: DPR Tree Pruning 2008-2012

Performance Statistics	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12
Trees pruned—Block program	75,810	79,658	29,782	30,776	29,497
Percent of pruning completed within established cycle	15%	16%	6%	6%	6%

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/dpr.pdf>

Tree Care

Reopening New York City’s parks was no small task. DPR maintains over 29,000 acres of parkland across the five boroughs. The park system contains a stunning variety of spaces for play and leisure, including more than 1,700 parks and 1,000 playgrounds; more than 800 athletic fields and 550 tennis courts; 55 outdoor swimming pools and 12 indoor swimming pools; 33 indoor rec centers; and 14 miles of beach. DPR also manages zoos, nature centers, ice rinks, marinas, golf courses and sports stadiums. In addition to managing a vast property portfolio, DPR is also responsible for the maintenance of 2,000,000 trees within parks and approximately 650,000 street trees.

The Mayors Management Report documents the broad scope of this responsibility. Between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012, DPR removed more than 16,000 trees throughout the city, including more than 8,500 street trees in response to 311 service requests.



Dangerous tree conditions kept parks closed after the storm, including this pathway in Inwood Hill Park, Manhattan.

The vast majority of these requests were addressed within 30 days.

In the two weeks after Sandy, DPR received more than 24,000 tree service requests from residents across the city, 14,000 of which were for downed or damaged trees.⁸ And Sandy is not the only recent storm to wreak havoc on trees: after Tropical Storm Irene, DPR attended to 3,444 fallen street trees, 3,403 fallen tree limbs, and 1,577 hanging branches.⁹

While Table 1 reveals that DPR is responsive to street tree removal requests, Table 2 shows a steep decline in street tree care over the past five years. In 2008, DPR had a \$7 million budget for pruning and stump removal. By 2012, that budget was slashed to a mere \$1.4 million. This means trees are pruned on a 20-year cycle rather than the ideal 7-year cycle. We can see this decline in funding reflected in the numbers in Table 2—50,000 fewer street trees were pruned in FY10 compared to the year before.

The proper care and prompt attention to tree health is essential to ensuring the safety of people on sidewalks and roadways, the structural integrity of public and private property, and the free flow of traffic. Given DPR’s responsibility for maintaining public safety, *it is clear DPR is providing an essential city service, and it should be funded accordingly.* We must expect and prepare for the increased occurrence of severe weather events across our region. DPR will continue working to protect our safety; precautionary and preventative tree care can help mitigate the extent of future post-storm recovery.



Tree damage in Marcus Garvey Park, Manhattan



Evidence of Sandy’s destruction in Asser Levy Park, Brooklyn



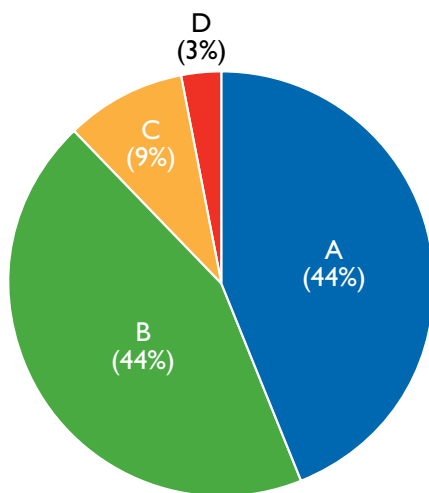
Storm debris along the waterfront in Kaiser Park, Brooklyn

Discussion

Summary of Scores

In 2010, 80% of large parks in our survey scored an A or B, and only one park received a failing grade. In 2012, we continued to observe overall high levels of large park maintenance, with 88% of parks receiving an A or B grade, and no parks failing.

Figure 1: Citywide Park Grades



By Feature

Lawns, drinking fountains, athletic fields, sitting areas, natural areas, bathrooms and courts all improved between 2010 and 2012, on average. In particular, lawns and drinking fountains posted large improvements (see Figure 2). The low performance of drinking fountains continues to be a concern. The decline in water bodies score is due in large part to our expanded definition of water bodies in the 2012 survey.¹⁰

	2012	2010	CHANGE
Lawns	87	69	18
Drinking Fountains	75	64	11
Athletic Fields	90	84	6
Sitting Areas	95	90	5
Natural Areas	91	87	4
Bathrooms	87	86	1
Courts	91	90	1
Playgrounds	90	91	-1
Trees	90	92	-2
Pathways	87	92	-5
Water Bodies	83	92	-9

Other trends

The *Report Card* methodology allows us to compare park features across the city and parks across time, noting local and systemic maintenance trends. It is also worth noting the lack of trends in our data. For example, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about borough-wide park performance from our data. With only two parks in Staten Island and five in the Bronx, we cannot meaningfully compare differences in average park scores across boroughs. Our data does not speak to the condition of all parks in a borough, or to the efficacy of borough-level maintenance staff. However, when we examine the 43 large parks in our survey in relation to one another, we see that no Brooklyn or

Bronx park received an A grade, and no Bronx park scored at or above the citywide average.

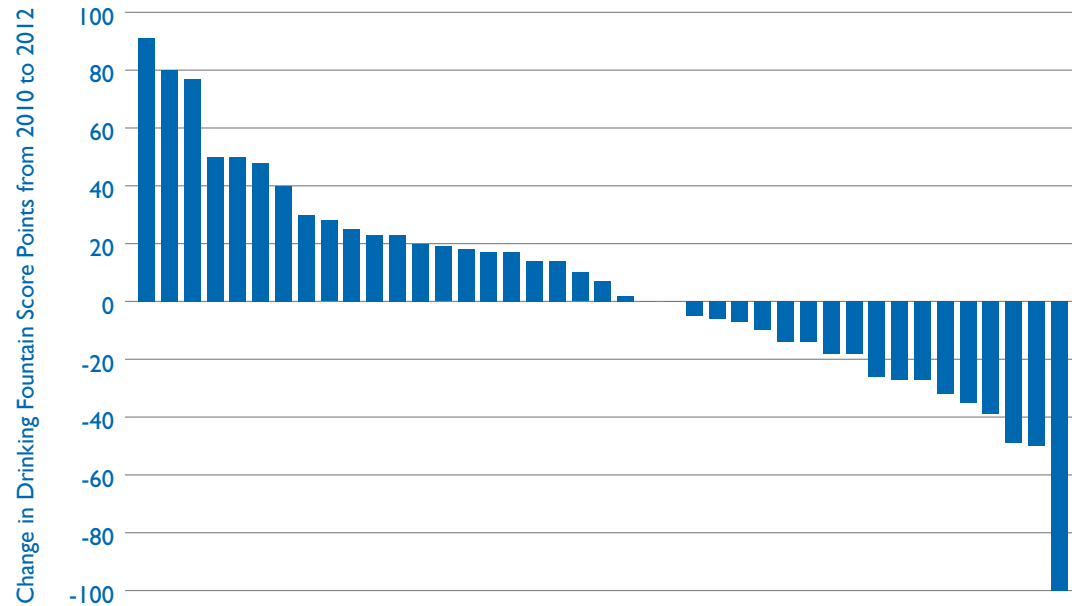
Shifting Maintenance Patterns

More feature scores improved than decreased, and more overall park scores improved than decreased. However, users don't visit "the park system on average." The large parks in our survey are situated in and adjacent to neighborhoods whose residents rely on those parks for outdoor recreation. The park-going experience of local visitors is directly impacted by the specific maintenance conditions of their local large parks. For every feature in our survey, even those that increased on average from 2010 to 2012, the performance increased in some parks and decreased in others. We are concerned that the Parks Department is forced to play a game of "Whac-A-Mole," allocating resources to one problem, resulting in another problem popping up elsewhere.

With the exception of lawns, which almost uniformly performed better in 2012, all of the feature scores exhibited variability across parks (see Figure 3). For example, while bathrooms performed better on average in 2012 than 2010, 37% of parks with bathroom assessments had lower scores in 2012—daily users of those parks don't experience the average improvement; they experience the conditions in a single park on a single visit.

Figure 3: Individual Park Feature Score Change 2010 to 2012			
	Increase	Stable	Decrease
Pathways	33%	18%	50%
Drinking Fountains	54%	5%	41%
Trees	23%	37%	40%
Natural Areas	59%	4%	37%
Bathrooms	52%	11%	37%
Athletic Fields	52%	13%	35%
Water Bodies	33%	33%	33%
Playgrounds	35%	32%	32%
Courts	46%	21%	32%
Sitting Areas	54%	26%	20%
Lawns	90%	0%	10%

Figure 4: Change in Individual Park Drinking Fountain Scores 2010 to 2012



Let's take the citywide drinking fountain feature score as an example. In 2010, drinking fountains were the lowest-scoring feature in our survey, earning an average score of 64. In 2012, drinking fountains remained the lowest-scoring feature, but the citywide average rose to 75. In 2010, 11% of fountains lacked sufficient pressure to drink; in 2012, that number was down to 6%. This is surely an improvement overall, but while many parks saw improvement to their water fountains, others saw deterioration. This is illustrated in Figure 4, in which each bar represents the change in drinking fountain score for an individual park from 2010 to 2012. There were 17 parks in which the condition of drinking fountains in 2012 was inferior to the condition in 2010. This affects the quality of the parkgoing experience for users in those 17 parks. DPR is performing admirably as it addresses multiple maintenance needs with limited resources; the pie is simply too small.

Cycles of Care

The Short Term: Continuous Stewardship

In our 2011 *Report Card on Large Parks*, we encouraged New Yorkers to pitch in and take care of their parks. Fred Kress, President of the Queens Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces, credits park volunteers for the overall high level of maintenance in Queens parks: “Volunteer groups are the backbone of the [maintenance] improvements and the higher grades. Park volunteers elevate the parks through their presence and their work, and the extra sets of eyes; they make sure people take care of the parks.”

In conversations with park advocates throughout the city, we have heard about creative community-based strategies to keep parks safe, clean, beautiful, and well programmed. Volunteer engagement in parks is crucial, particularly to help address day-to-day maintenance needs that require “boots on the ground.” Trash pick-up, weeding, and beautification projects are ongoing activities that dedicated volunteers, working in partnership with Parks Department staff, can take on and really make a difference in a park’s overall appearance and feel.



Other perennial maintenance issues require skilled technicians such as plumbers to fix drinking fountains and bathrooms, tree pruners to address dangerous tree branches, and operators of heavy machinery to remove tree stumps from lawns. These tasks are not as regular as picking up litter, but they do require constant attention. If deferred too long, such routine maintenance activities can turn into major projects, or worse, become emergency repairs necessary to address safety concerns.



The Mid Term: Equipment Replacement

Park features and other elements of a park’s infrastructure have finite lifespans. Safety surfacing and artificial turf fields, heavily utilized and exposed to the elements, will deteriorate over time. Asphalt pathways crumble, and growing tree roots push up and destroy tree pit pavers. Several of the parks whose scores slipped from 2010 to 2012 were penalized for a single feature in disrepair. Most common was aging playground safety surfacing starting to crack or peel back, creating trip hazards. These cycles of deterioration are fairly predictable, and it is essential that the Parks Department have the funds to plan ongoing equipment and infrastructure replacement as a necessary supplement to day-to-day maintenance.



Cleaning up debris in Astoria Park after Superstorm Sandy

The Long Term: Broader Urban Planning

Parks are part of the larger fabric of New York City. They are vulnerable to infrastructure weaknesses and failures while also being part and parcel of that infrastructure. Particularly in light of Sandy and other weather-related events, we must think about the long-term structural integrity of parks properties, as well as the ways in which parks can contribute to the long-term integrity of other city infrastructure. What will parks experiencing hillside erosion, such as Fort Greene or St. Mary’s, look like in 100 years? How do we protect the integrity of parks in areas vulnerable to flooding such as Asser Levy or Kaiser Park? How can we design these parks to mitigate the effects of storm surges and climate change? When we think about maintaining our city’s parks, we cannot afford to just think about today’s needs, or even those five years down the road. We must also undertake long-term park planning—and broader urban planning—to ensure the future integrity of our waterways, shorelines, wetlands, roads and bike paths, public transit, housing, and indeed, the city itself.



View of the Hudson River from Inwood Hill Park, Manhattan

Appendix: Detailed Methodology

THE METHODOLOGY IS BROKEN DOWN INTO SEVEN SECTIONS:

- Survey Population
- Identifying & Weighting Major Service Areas
- Survey Instrument: Feature Forms
- Conducting the Survey
- Assigning Numerical Scores
- Converting Numerical Scores to Letter Grades
- Sample Calculation: Shore Road Park, Brooklyn

Survey Population

The *Report Card on Large Parks* focuses on New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) park properties between 20 and 500 acres in area. Due to staffing constraints and the length of the surveying season, surveying parks larger than 500 acres was deemed infeasible. (There are 14 DPR parks larger than 500 acres.)

DPR operates approximately 130 park properties between 20 and 500 acres. In selecting sites appropriate for surveying, the following categories of park properties were removed from the survey population: highway properties, undeveloped parkland, islands, gardens, golf courses, marshes, beaches, forests, properties without active recreation, properties undergoing significant capital projects, and parks in which all zones are larger than 50 acres. The final survey universe was 43 parks.

DPR divides all large parks into maintenance zones called Park Inspection Program zones, or PIP zones. The zone boundaries often follow pathways, streets, physical barriers such as a tree-line or hill, or the outside of a cluster of active recreation features. Due

to the large size of the parks, an evaluation of the total acreage of every property was not feasible. To address this challenge, NY4P surveyed a subset of all PIP zones in the 43 parks in our survey universe. The project statistician randomly selected the least number of zones greater than or equal to 50% of all zones within a given property.

Identifying & Weighting Major Service Areas

In constructing the *Report Card* methodology, NY4P took a user-focused approach to identify seven Major Service Areas (MSAs) impacting a park-user's experience. NY4P convened a group of park experts, community leaders, and elected officials to help define the seven MSAs, along with a scale of weights to reflect the relative importance of different indicators. Participants were asked to rate the MSAs on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the least important to their park experience, and 5 being the most important. Participants also provided feedback on the structure and composition of the MSAs. In addition, 20 park-users at Brooklyn's Prospect Park were asked to rate the relative importance of the seven MSAs. The rankings provided by the respondents were then averaged and rounded to the nearest whole number to provide a final MSA relative weight (see Table 1).

Once each form was scored, MSA ratings were calculated. First, scored forms were grouped by MSA for each park property across all zones surveyed. Those MSAs with exactly one corresponding completed form were allotted the numerical score of that single form. Those MSAs with more than one completed form were scored according to a weighted average of the corresponding form scores, as follows:

Table 1:
Major Service Areas and Relative Weights

Description	Weight
<p>Active Recreation</p> <p>The Active Recreation MSA evaluates the maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and structural integrity of each hockey rink; soccer, football, and baseball field; and tennis, bocce, handball, basketball, and volleyball court in selected survey zones.</p>	3
<p>Drinking Fountains</p> <p>The Drinking Fountains MSA evaluates the maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and structural integrity of each discrete drinking fountain in selected survey zones.</p>	3
<p>Pathways</p> <p>The Pathways MSA evaluates the maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and structural integrity of each type of walkway in a zone, including those made of asphalt, pavers, brick, dirt or concrete in selected survey zones.</p>	3
<p>Bathrooms</p> <p>The Bathrooms MSA evaluates the maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and structural integrity of each bathroom in selected survey zones.</p>	4
<p>Passive Greenspace</p> <p>The Passive Greenspace MSA evaluates the maintenance, cleanliness, and safety of every lawn, landscaped area, garden, water body, natural area and tree pit in selected survey zones.</p>	5
<p>Playgrounds</p> <p>The Playgrounds MSA evaluates the maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and structural integrity of each playground in selected survey zones.</p>	5
<p>Sitting Areas</p> <p>The Sitting Areas MSA evaluates the maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and structural integrity of each sitting area in selected survey zones.</p>	5

Suppose C_1, C_2, \dots, C_n are the n-many form scores corresponding to a given MSA. Let D_1, D_2, \dots, D_n be those forms' corresponding relative weights (see Table 1). MSA numerical scores were then calculated as the following quotient:

$$(C_1 * D_1 + C_2 * D_2 + \dots + C_n * D_n) / (D_1 + D_2 + \dots + D_n)$$

No MSA rating was assigned to a zone that lacked any given major service area; in this way, no park was penalized for not having any of the survey's seven MSA types.

Each park's raw score was calculated in a similar fashion. Suppose E_1, E_2, \dots, E_m were a park's MSA scores with corresponding weights F_1, F_2, \dots, F_m . Final raw scores were then calculated as the following quotient:

$$(E_1 * F_1 + E_2 * F_2 + \dots + E_m * F_m) / (F_1 + F_2 + \dots + F_m)$$

Survey Instrument: Feature Forms

NY4P staff, in cooperation with statistical consultants from the firm of Ernst & Young, then developed question forms with which to evaluate the MSAs found in each park. Individual questions were designed to measure the performance of the MSAs in each of the following categories: maintenance, cleanliness, safety and structural integrity.

Whenever possible, the form questions were adapted from DPR's PIP evaluation. During the construction of *The Report Card on Parks*, a second focus group was convened to provide relative weights to individual feature forms on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the least important to their park experience, and 5 being the most important. Next, the focus group was asked to designate

each of the individual form questions as 'priority' or 'routine.' Priority ratings refer to those conditions of a park feature necessary for its safe use. Finally, the focus group rated questions tagged as routine on a scale from 1 to 5.

NY4P hosted a third focus group on "Active Recreation Space." This group provided commentary on ideal conditions for active recreational activities and provided general feedback on active play areas, including courts, turf ballfields, and asphalt ballfields, which was then integrated into the survey questions.

Conducting the Survey

Survey work for *The Report Card on Large Parks* took place from May to August 2012 from the hours of 10am to dusk, Tuesday through Thursday. Surveying was not scheduled on days following Memorial Day and July 4 to allow DPR time to clean after heavy holiday use. NY4P trained four surveyors to complete the survey work. NY4P senior staff held a training session during May 2012 to train surveyors in the following techniques: use of the handheld computers and digital cameras, delineation of park features, use of survey forms and standards manual, and procedures for documenting features with digital cameras. The training sessions included the full review of a park, collection of data according to defined standards, proper photo documentation, safety procedures and methods for storing data upon completion of survey.

In the field, surveyors completed a feature form for each feature included in a selected zone. For example, for every drinking fountain in a zone, a "drinking fountain" form was completed so that in a zone with three drinking fountains, a surveyor would complete three "drinking fountain" feature forms. Additionally, surveyors completed a form for every playground, bathroom, lawn or landscaped area, etc.

In addition to completing survey forms, surveyors took extensive digital photographs to support and complement survey results. All survey findings and feature forms receive an identification number and are correlated to a series of photographs documenting conditions for each park in the survey. Survey results and photo documentation are stored in a central database. When photo documentation did not correspond to results or did not adequately illustrate park conditions, the park was revisited and re-evaluated by surveyors.

Assigning Numerical Scores

Each completed form was assigned a numerical grade between 0 and 100. Any park feature receiving an "unacceptable" rating on any priority question was assigned a form grade of zero. However, in the large majority of completed forms, park features received only "acceptable" ratings to all priority questions. In these cases, the calculation appears as follows:

Let A denote the sum of the relative weights of routine survey questions receiving "acceptable" ratings. Let B denote the sum of the relative weights of routine survey questions receiving either "acceptable" or "unacceptable" ratings. Each form's final numerical score is then 100 times the quotient of A divided by B. No form score was assigned to a park that lacked any given feature; in this way no park was penalized for not having any of the survey's 11 feature types.

Converting Numerical Scores to Letter Grades

During the creation of the *Report Card on Parks*, a fourth focus group consisting of park managers and open space experts was convened to determine the assignment of letter grades to raw scores. Participants were brought to three parks in Manhattan and asked

to provide a letter grade for the park based on a brief description of the MSAs and a tour of the park. These letter grades were consistent with the raw number scores for the parks and resulted in the raw score/grade assignment chart (see Table 2).

Table 2:
Conversion from Raw Scores to Letter Grades

Raw Scores	Letter Grade
97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
59 and below	F

Sample Calculation:
Shore Road Park, Brooklyn

Table 3 shows actual 2012 surveyor responses for Shore Road Park in Brooklyn. Tables 3, 4 and 5 illustrate a summary of form data and the subsequent calculation of form, MSA and park scores.

Table 3: Summary of Shore Road Park Form Data

Form	Form Scores	Form Score Average
Athletic Fields	0, 0, 0, 100, 88, 100, 100	55
Bathrooms	81, 87, 100, 92	90
Courts	100, 100, 100, 100, 100	100
Drinking Fountains	100, 100, 100, 100, 100, 100	100
Lawns and Landscaped Areas	100, 84, 100, 88, 0, 100	84
Natural Areas	83, 100, 100, 83, 100, 0, 83, 0, 100	72
Pathways	100, 0, 0	33
Playgrounds	100, 100, 100	100
Sitting Areas	100	100
Trees	89	89

Table 4: Summary of Shore Road Park MSA Data

MSA	Calculation	MSA Score
Active Recreation	(Athletic field average + Court average) / 2	78
Bathrooms	Form score average from Table 3	90
Drinking Fountains	Form score average from Table 3	100
Passive Greenspace	[(Lawns, Landscaped Areas*2) + (Trees*1)] / 3	80
Pathways	Form score average from Table 3	33
Playgrounds	Form score average from Table 3	100
Sitting Areas	Form score average from Table 3	100

The raw score for Shore Road Park was calculated by the weighted average of the seven MSA scores listed in Table 3.

Table 5: Calculation of Shore Road Park Raw Score and Weight Grade

MSA	MSA Score times Weight
Active Recreation	78 * 3 = 234
Bathrooms	90 * 4 = 360
Drinking Fountains	100 * 3 = 300
Passive Greenspace	80 * 5 = 400
Pathways	33 * 3 = 99
Playgrounds	100 * 5 = 500
Sitting Areas	100 * 5 = 500
Total	2393

This total, 2393, was then divided by the sum of the weights of the seven MSAs, listed in Table 1. This sum is 28, so that the raw park score for Shore Road Park is 2393/28= 86.

Endnotes

- ¹ September, 2012 Mayor’s Management Report: http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/0912_mmr.pdf
- ² In the summer of 2010, NY4P surveyors visited 45 large parks. We returned to those parks in the summer of 2012 with a few exceptions. The current report revisits 42 of those parks and includes one additional park property, for a total of 43 parks. We added Kaiser Park to the 2012 survey after the completion of a major capital improvement project. We revisited the same survey zones in Wards and Randall’s Island Park in 2010 and 2012; however, this year we have consolidated the scores into a single Randall’s Island Park score. In 2010, we visited Fort Washington Park, but in 2012 the park was undergoing significant reconstruction and was excluded from our survey. Riverside Park North, as a stand-alone property, does not meet the acreage requirements for large parks and was removed from the 2012 survey.
- ³ We removed the “Immediate Environment” feature from the 2012 survey protocol. This feature evaluated parks based on the effect of external conditions—noise, traffic, and pollution—on the park-going experience. Many of our assessments penalized parks for permanent design features of the landscape over which DPR has no control (e.g. MacNeil Park extends into the East River across from LaGuardia Airport; the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge runs over Randall’s Island Park). Instead, 2012 field surveyors wrote structured reflection notes on the quality of the park-going experience at the end of each survey visit. These notes will inform our follow-up outreach work to ensure safe access to all parks.
- ⁴ <http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/daily-plant?id=22780>
- ⁵ <http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/daily-plant?id=22781>
- ⁶ <http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/daily-plant?id=22826>
- ⁷ <http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/notices>
- ⁸ <http://www.nycgovparks.org/news/daily-plant?id=22784>
- ⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/12/nyregion/hurricane-sandy-inflicted-a-beating-on-new-york-city-trees.html>
- ¹⁰ We surveyed an additional 11 ocean-front water bodies in 2012. We believe the change in score reflects a change in the survey universe, not a systemic decline in water body maintenance. Park caretakers and stakeholders should examine water body scores on a park-by-park basis to address specific maintenance conditions.

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