



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Julie Menin CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

PARKS: A Community Needs Assessment through Inventory and Analysis

Community Board 1

Heather Anderson, Urban Planning Associate

July 2011

PARKS: A Community Needs Assessment through Inventory and Analysis

Community Board 1

Heather Anderson, Urban Planning Associate
July 2011

The population boom of the last decade in Community District 1 has not been met by a corresponding strengthening of infrastructure. This mismatch in infrastructure and residents' needs has become apparent in continuing issues like school overcrowding, and has inspired the Community Board to pursue a community facilities and amenities inventory to assess where residents have adequate access to community resources, and where there are needs that are not being met.

One section of the inventory is this study's assessment of park space. Currently, there is approximately 3.5 million square feet of open and park space in CB 1 area. Fieldwork and observation supported what many Lower Manhattan residents already know: A large portion of this open space does not serve the community, is not accessible, and does not facilitate active recreation. Of the 3.5 million square feet of open space, only 27% (938,250 square feet) is active and accessible park space. Some parks serve as a destination for non-residents, such as South Street Seaport and Battery Park. Several small parks throughout CB 1 area mainly support people employed in the vicinity. Spaces that actually provide green space are not automatically accessible or active; several parks' green space is for landscape purposes, and not for active use.

Battery Park City was found by far to have the most active park space, with 612,409 sq ft, followed by the Financial District (150,500 sq ft), Tribeca (147,028 sq ft), and Seaport/Civic Center with the least (28,313 sq ft). Total active park space within the Seaport/Civic Center area is comprised of only two playgrounds and a dog run, which means that this neighborhood has no active park space for adult residents.

The addition of the East River Waterfront Esplanade promises to increase open and park space in the Financial District and the Seaport/Civic Center area. The esplanade design plan's CB 1 features include a dog run, an elevated lawn at Pier 15, a bicycle path connecting the Battery to the East River Park, as well as general amenities like seating, lighting and access to the water's edge. It remains to be seen how much community function this new open space will provide, and how much will serve as destination.

During the fieldwork and study, it was clear that Community Board 1 residents need better access to active space. This study highlights the areas where this need is strongest.

Methodology

According to the *Parks, Recreation and Open-Space Needs Assessment* guidelines of the American Planning Association's Planning and Urban Design Standards, understanding the adequacy of park space requires quantitative data collection, qualitative data collection, and community discussion.

Quantitative Data: The first step was the creation of an inventory of open and park space in Community Board 1. This inventory includes area in square footage of open space in order to compare open space and population. This study used the parks inventory initiated by the Urban Planning Fellow of 2009-2010, Matt Viggiano. Expansion of the inventory was based on data from the agencies responsible for the spaces, including the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, the New York City Department of Transportation, the U.S. National Park Service, Hudson River Park Trust, Battery Park City Parks Conservancy, and the Battery Conservancy. Open and park space was mapped to illustrate the distribution of space throughout Community Board 1.

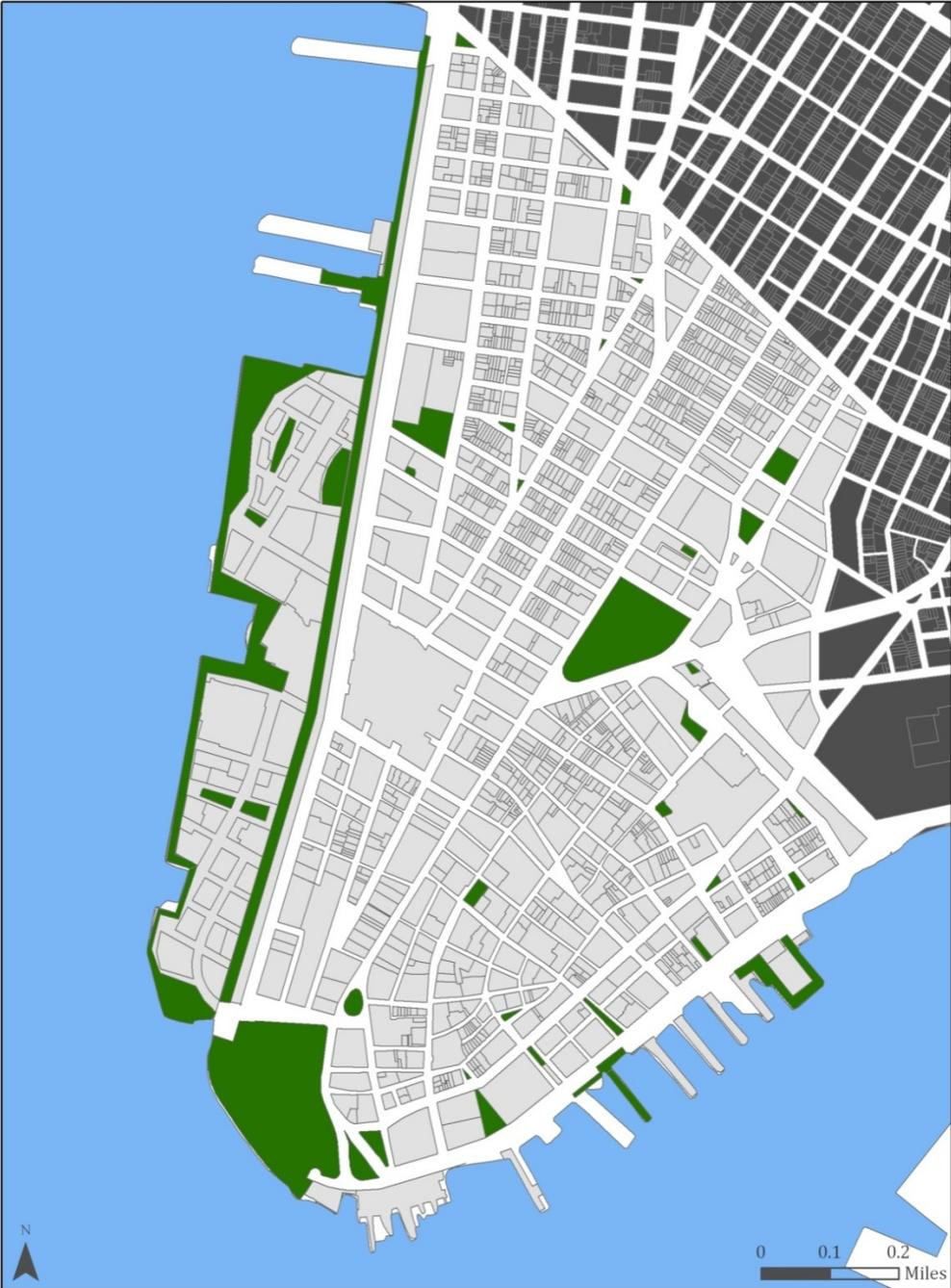
There is no official formula for how much park space per resident should be available within a community. However, this study attempted a comparison of open space available in each of the Manhattan Community Districts to explore whether there is a norm or implicit standard. The data for this comparison was acquired through the New York City Department of City Planning.

Qualitative Data: An inventory of open and park space in Lower Manhattan is not the whole picture. In acknowledging that not all “open and park space” is serving community needs, this study collected descriptive information about each of the spaces. A base of this information was compiled from studies completed by Pace University students. First-hand fieldwork and observation were also accomplished. Recreation (active or passive), green space access (whether there is green space and whether it is accessible), and population served (community or destination) are the categories used to explore these spaces. For the latter category, the additional designation “Lunch Benchers” was coined and used to describe the many parks in Community Board 1 area that primarily serve local employees on their lunch breaks.

Community Discussion: This study aims to contribute to a discourse of community needs, and support community advocacy for better access to active park space through the data collected.

Results and Analysis

Figure 1. Open and Park Space, Community District 1



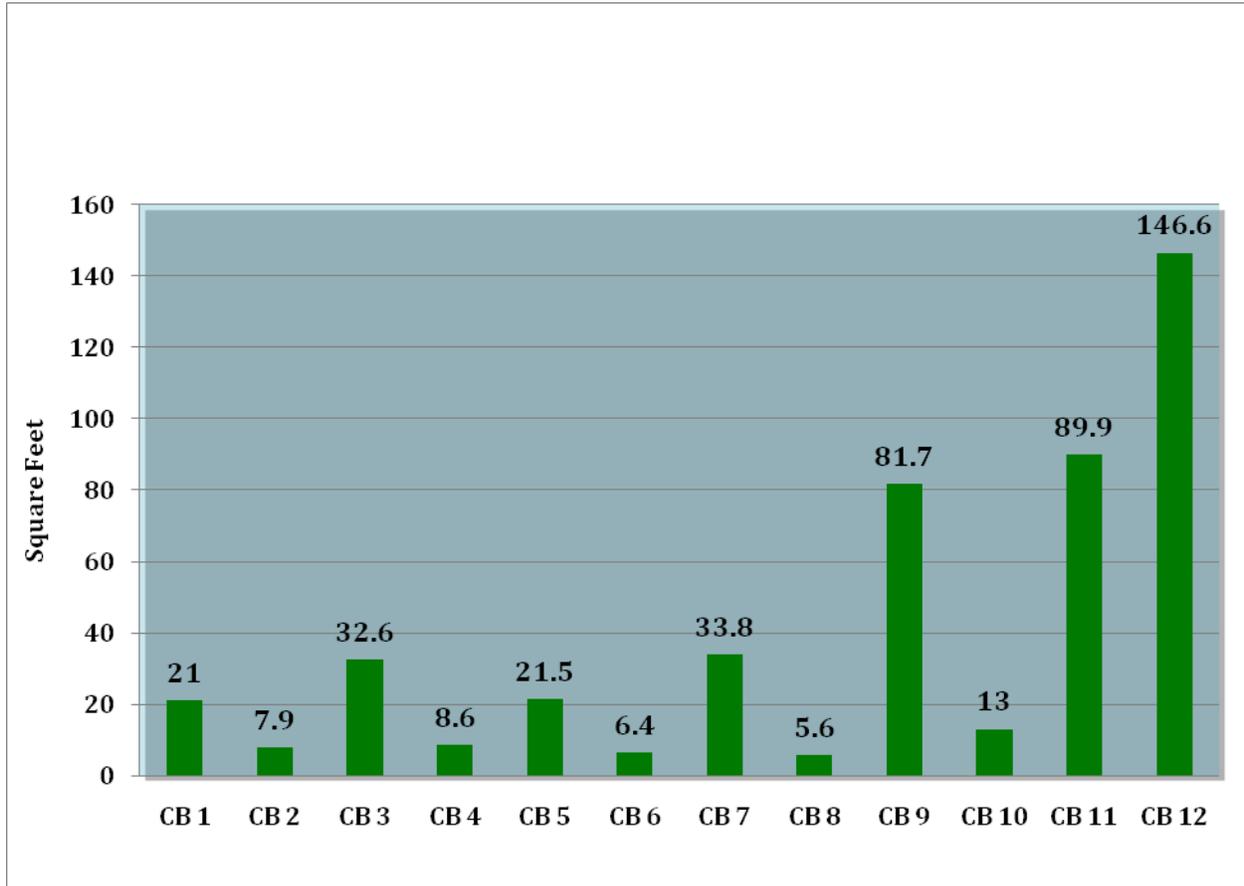
Data acquired through New York City Department of City Planning, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Battery Park Conservancy and the Hudson River Park Trust and fieldwork observations.

Table 1. Inventory of Open and Park Space, CD 1

| NAME | SUB-AREA | AREA (sq ft) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Battery Park City Parks | BPC | 1,524,600 |
| | | |
| Battery Park | FD | 949,608 |
| Bowling Green | FD | 44,431 |
| Coenties Park | FD | 4,687 |
| Hanover Square Park | FD | 2,613 |
| Mannahatta Park | FD | 15,890 |
| Old Slip Park | FD | 8,000 |
| Peter Minuit Plaza | FD | 56,628 |
| Pier 11/Wall Street Ferry | FD | 1,178 |
| Vietnam Veterans Plaza | FD | 31,799 |
| | | |
| African Burial Ground | SCC | 14,810 |
| City Hall Park | SCC | 382,328 |
| City Hall Triangle Park | SCC | 5,000 |
| Collect Pond Park | SCC | 43,560 |
| Drumgoole Plaza | SCC | 10,000 |
| Fishbridge Garden | SCC | 4,356 |
| Foley Square/Thomas Paine Park | SCC | 108,900 |
| Imagination Playground | SCC | 16,988 |
| John J DeLury Plaza | SCC | 8,712 |
| Pearl Street Playground | SCC | 6,969 |
| Peck Slip Park | SCC | 8,276 |
| South Street Seaport | SCC | 2,159 |
| South Street Seaport Esplanade | SCC | 7,006 |
| | | |
| Albert Capsouto Park | Tribeca | 30,056 |
| Bogardus Square | Tribeca | 4,875 |
| Canal Park | Tribeca | 29,185 |
| Duane Street Park | Tribeca | 5,227 |
| Finn Square | Tribeca | 4,356 |
| Hudson River Park | Tribeca | 110,000 |
| Tribeca Dog Run | Tribeca | 4,356 |
| Tribeca Park | Tribeca | 1,742 |
| Washington Market Park | Tribeca | 70,132 |

TOTAL: 3,518,427

Figure 2. Area of Land Zoned for Open Space and Recreation per Resident by Community District



The bar graph above uses data from the District Profile of each Community District created by the New York City Department of Planning in an attempt to search for a park space standard. The area zoned for open space and recreation is from 2010, while the population used in the calculation is from 2000, except for CB 1 which uses the most recent population estimate of 61,051 (as taken from the CB 1 report *Population Projection Update*).

Although this graph presents an interesting comparison, the data is problematic. The area zoned for open space and recreation can be a gross over-estimate, as was the case for CB 11 where Randall's Island was included (the figure shown for CB 11 is adjusted to exclude Randall's Island). The area can also be an under-estimate, as actual park space can exceed what is zoned for open space and recreation. Within CB 1, the zoned area for open space and recreation is 1,257,600 sq ft, while the inventory of open and park space shows it at 3,518,427 sq ft. Additionally, the populations for all except CB 1 are a decade old.

Despite the inaccuracy of the information, it is an interesting exploration given the lack of an explicit formula for calculating community need for parks.

Table 2. Inventory of Park Space with Fieldwork Observations, CD 1

| NAME | SUB-AREA | RECREATION | GREEN SPACE | DESTINATION/COMMUNITY | AREA (sq ft) |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Battery Park City Parks | BPC | Passive, Active | Accessible | Community, some Destination | 1,524,600 |
| Battery Park | FD | Passive, Active | Accessible | Destination, some Community | 949,608 |
| Bowling Green | FD | Passive | Accessible | Lunch Benchers | 44,431 |
| Coenties Park | FD | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 4,687 |
| East River Waterfront | FD | COMING SOON | | | |
| Hanover Square Park | FD | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 2,613 |
| Wall Street Park | FD | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 15,890 |
| Old Slip Park | FD | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 8,000 |
| Peter Minuit Plaza | FD | Passive | No Green Space | Transit Hub | 56,628 |
| Pier 11/Wall Street Ferry | FD | Passive | No Access | Destination, some Community | 1,178 |
| Vietnam Veterans Plaza | FD | Passive | No Access | Destination, Lunch Benchers | 31,799 |
| African Burial Ground | SCC | Passive | No Access | Destination | 14,810 |
| City Hall Park | SCC | Passive | No Access | Destination, Lunch Benchers | 382,328 |
| City Hall Triangle Park | SCC | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 5,000 |
| Collect Pond Park | SCC | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 43,560 |
| Drumgoole Plaza | SCC | UNDER CONSTRUCTION | | | 10,000 |
| East River Waterfront | SCC | COMING SOON | | | |
| Fishbridge Garden | SCC | Active | No Green Space | Community | 4,356 |
| Foley Square/Thomas Paine Park | SCC | Passive | Accessible | Lunch Benchers | 108,900 |
| Imagination Playground | SCC | Active | No Green Space | Community | 16,988 |
| John J DeLury Plaza | SCC | Passive | Accessible | Community | 8,712 |
| Pearl Street Playground | SCC | Active | No Green Space | Community | 6,969 |
| Peck Slip Park | SCC | COMING SOON | | | 8,276 |
| South Street Seaport | SCC | Passive | No Green Space | Destination | 2,159 |
| South Street Seaport Esplanade | SCC | Passive | No Green Space | Destination | 7,006 |
| Albert Capsouto Park | Tribeca | Passive | Accessible | Community | 30,056 |
| Bogardus Square | Tribeca | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 4,875 |
| Canal Park | Tribeca | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 29,185 |
| Duane Street Park | Tribeca | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 5,227 |
| Finn Square | Tribeca | Passive | No Access | GreenStreets | 4,356 |
| Hudson River Park | Tribeca | Active, Passive | Accessible | Community, some Destination | 110,000 |
| Tribeca Dog Run | Tribeca | Active | No Green Space | Community | 4,356 |
| Tribeca Park | Tribeca | Passive | No Access | Lunch Benchers | 1,742 |
| Washington Market Park | Tribeca | Active | No Access | Community | 70,132 |

Parks highlighted are those that include some active space.

Figure 3. Active Park Space, CD1



Data acquired through New York City Department of City Planning 2008 PLUTO files and fieldwork observation.

- ★ Playground
- ★ One Sports Court or Field
- ★ Two or More Sports Courts or Fields
- ★ Dog Run
- ★ Accessible and Active Green Space

Dog runs and community gardens are included as active park space. Although they are not typically perceived as active, they are community-serving spaces that support physically-engaged activity. CB 1's 7 playgrounds, 5 dog runs, 2 community gardens, 1 urban farm and multiple sports courts are predominantly clustered at the western edge of CB 1 area.

Table 3. Active and Accessible Park Space, CD 1

| NAME | SUB-AREA | AREA (sq ft) |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Battery Park City Parks | | |
| BPCA Ballfields | BPC | 175,000 |
| East of North Cove | BPC | 40,000 |
| Nelson A. Rockefeller Park | BPC | 178,632 |
| Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park | BPC | 73,581 |
| Teardrop Park | BPC | 84,196 |
| West Thames Park | BPC | 70,000 |
| Battery Park | | |
| Lawn | FD | 100,000 |
| Playground | FD | 17,000 |
| Urban Farm | FD | 43,500 |
| Fishbridge Garden | | |
| | SCC | 4,356 |
| Imagination Playground | | |
| | SCC | 16,988 |
| Pearl Street Playground | | |
| | SCC | 6,969 |
| Hudson River Park | | |
| Basketball Court | Tribeca | 4,200 |
| Pier 25, Volleyball | Tribeca | 12,800 |
| Pier 25, Soccer | Tribeca | 17,500 |
| Pier 25, Playground | Tribeca | 25,000 |
| Pier 25, Skate Park | Tribeca | 8,840 |
| Pier 25, Basketball Court | Tribeca | 4,200 |
| Tribeca Dog Run | | |
| | Tribeca | 4,356 |
| Tribeca Park | | |
| | Tribeca | 1,742 |
| Washington Market Park | | |
| | Tribeca | 70,132 |

Larger parks, such as Battery Park, were broken down in order to arrive at the area of active and accessible space. Due to challenges in access to exact park space measurements, some park space area was estimated from scaled maps or conventional sports courts measurements.

Table 4. Open Space and Active Park Space by Neighborhood, CD 1

| | Open Space (sq ft) | Active Space (sq ft) |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Battery Park City | 1,524,600 | 612,409 |
| Financial District | 1,114,834 | 150,500 |
| Seaport/Civic Center | 619,064 | 28,313 |
| Tribeca | 259,929 | 147,028 |
| TOTAL: | 3,518,427 | 938,250 |

According to this study, there is 15.4 square feet of active park space per resident in CB 1 area. Given that this figure relies on the population estimate of 61,051, and the 2010 Census estimates are implying a larger population, this is an overestimate of active space per resident. When the definitive 2010 Census population for CB1 is published, active park space per resident should be recalculated.