

14% Park NEW YORK CITY

Making the Impact, Importance, & Needs of NYC Green Spaces Visible

This exhibit strives to present a comprehensive look at how NYC is 14% Park (30,000 acres) and why that matters. Fittingly, this exploration is centered around a map, visually representing how green spaces are 14% of NYC. While traditional maps of NYC obscure green spaces, by focusing on things such as neighborhood names or subway lines, and completely omit Community Gardens, this psychogeographic map of NYC emphasizes the parks of NYC (in green), labels the Community Gardens (in blue), maps the important community events that are held in NYC green spaces (in light blue), and provides contrasting images of Central Park in the 1980s vs. today. Through exploring this map, this exhibit reveals the health benefits and community that NYC Green Spaces provide, the care necessary to maintain NYC green spaces, and the rise of the Community Garden. This map calls for people to cultivate the green in NYC.

The Importance of NYC Green Spaces: Health Benefits and Community

Today, parks play a huge part in New Yorkers' quality of life, while lowering NYC's carbon footprint and providing an urban habitat for wildlife (more than 230 bird species rely on the natural resources of NYC parks). Central Park's 18,000+ trees alone remove one million pound of Carbon Dioxide from the air each year, improving air quality. Additionally, NYC's trees keep NYC cooler in Summer by providing shade and cooling the air by absorbing water. While decreasing air pollution and heat, parks also encourage people to exercise - the fact that NYC is 14% park means that most New Yorkers (living near NYC green spaces) are 25% more likely to exercise. We can see from the map that most New Yorkers live close to a green space. We also see the abundance of community events held in parks and community gardens. NYC green spaces provides free public space for public events and needs, private events and needs, and the playground needs of NYC schools, providing vital space for building community. This map emphasizes the parks, community gardens, and park events that are central to our city.

The History of the Park & the Neglect of NYC Parks

The city's parks reveal New York's history.* From the beginning, as seen in the 1686 Dongan Charter of the City of New York, one of the goals of NYC government was creating parks. Beginning in 1811, New York City government recognized "the benefit of fresh air" that parks could provide and begun creating parks for recreational purposes. In 1850, a growing

movement of New Yorkers begin to advocate for a large central park. Listening to their demands, by 1853, the city began building Central Park. 1929-1965 was a golden age of park creation, with 15 outdoor swimming pools, 17 miles of beaches, and 84 miles of parkways built. But while much was built, parks were not maintained well. Beginning in 1927, concerns about the maintenance of the already existing parks were already being raised, and due to increasing budget attrition, by 1980, parks, especially Central Park, were filled with dead plants and graffitied rocks. The map represents this decline of NYC green space with 1980s photos of Central Park. *Note: The history of NYC parks corresponds with many civil rights movements and American cultural changes (if you're interested in learning more, visit <https://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history>).

NYC Green from 1980: The Renovation of Central Park & Rise of Community Gardens

In 1978, in order to rejuvenate declining parks, Parks Commissioner Gordon J. Davis initiated new policies: many parks facilities, such as ice skating rinks and zoos, were turned over to private concessionaires who have permits; due to a lack of enough workers, rather than having workers stationed in specific parks, roving park maintenance crews were established; and the Parks Department gave up certain maintenance responsibilities to other departments. In 1981, Mayor Koch dedicated \$750 million to rebuilding the city's parks. Not only did the city dedicate more resources to the parks, understanding their importance, but citizens gathered together to protect their public spaces. Though some people criticize these non-profits as privatization, the formation of the Central Park Conservancy and the Prospect Park Alliance in the 1980s by non-government New York citizens and the work they do to raise funds have been central to rebuilding Central Park (the map shows the rejuvenated Park) and Prospect Park. At the same time, the 1970s financial crisis, led to the abandonment of many public and private land in NYC. New Yorkers began to create Community Gardens in these spaces. Noticing the takeover of spaces for gardens, Green Thumb was started by the city in 1978 to provide programming, material support, and technical assistance to these endeavors. Today, there are more than 550 community gardens (shown as blue dots on map) in New York City, run by 20,000 volunteer community gardeners. While the turnaround of NYC parks was miraculous, there is still more work needed to support the parks and community gardens vital to NYC. A recent report, *A New Leaf: Revitalizing New York City's Aging Parks Infrastructure*, released June 2018, found that parks across the five boroughs are facing severe infrastructural challenges to the detriment of peoples' safety and health, leisure and recreation, and community. This map aims to make people think about how important NYC green spaces are to them and motivate people to act to maintain and rejuvenate failing green spaces and the community they cultivate.

For more information on NYC green spaces and what you can do to help:

“About the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.” *About Parks : NYC Parks*,
www.nycgovparks.org/about.

Conservancy, Central Park. “About Us.” *The Official Website of Central Park NYC*,
www.centralparknyc.org/about/.

Department of Parks and Recreation. “NYC Greenthumb Community Gardens: NYC Open Data.” *NYC Greenthumb Community Gardens | NYC Open Data*, New York City Agencies and Partners, 16 Sept. 2017,
data.cityofnewyork.us/Environment/NYC-Greenthumb-Community-Gardens/ajxm-kzmj.

“GreenThumb.” *NYC Parks GreenThumb*, greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/about.html.

“History.” *Parks History : NYC Parks*, www.nycgovparks.org/about/history.

“New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.” *New York City Department of Parks & Recreation*,
www.nycgovparks.org/.

“NYC Parks Events.” *NYC Open Data*, New York City Agencies and Partners, 2 Nov. 2019,
data.cityofnewyork.us/browse?Data-Collection_Data-Collection=NYC%2BParks%2BEvents&sortBy=alpha.

“Parks Properties.” *NYC Open Data*, NYC Agencies And Other Partners,
data.cityofnewyork.us/City-Government/Parks-Properties/k2ya-ucmv.

Sain-Baird, Jessica. “How Central Park Keeps New York City Healthy.” *How Central Park Keeps New York City Healthy - The Official Website of Central Park NYC*, 25 Apr. 2017,
www.centralparknyc.org/about/blog/central-park-keeps-nyc-healthy.html.

Schulz, Dana. “See How Much Central Park Has Changed Since the '80s in These Before-and-After Photos.” *6sqft*, 24 Dec. 2015,
www.6sqft.com/see-how-much-central-park-has-changed-since-the-80s-in-these-before-and-after-photos/.

Surico, John. “A New Leaf: Revitalizing New York City's Aging Parks Infrastructure.” *Center for an Urban Future (CUF)*, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, June 2018,
nycfuture.org/research/a-new-leaf.

Technology Used to Create the Map:

I collected the data of Parks Properties, NYC Greenthumb Community Gardens, and the data collection of NYC Parks Events from NYC Open Data. I used Google Fusion to merge the events, location, and image data collection of NYC Park Events into one data collection. I then used CARTO to create my data, mapping my data and choosing what data to present and how to present it, designing my legend, choosing the colors around a nature theme, and choosing what information to present about the Parks, Community Gardens, and Events when users clicked on a data point. I then used my knowledge in html and css to create my website, displaying my map, with my pdf, and the images of Central Park in 1980 vs. today.

Link to Map I created:

<https://cleoderocco.carto.com/builder/3e229a4d-53a5-4f9f-b277-acc0a9b8f0d3/embed>