

Bryant Park

New York City, New York, U.S.A.

Bryant Park, located just blocks from Time Square in New York City, was once a refuge from the city noise and activity. In the early 1900s, the park began to deteriorate due to poor design and lack of maintenance. Stairs, walls and overgrown greenery segmented the space and made it dark and difficult to access. Despite efforts to revitalize the park in the 1930s and 1940s, illegal activity continued to plague the area. Police barricaded every entrance to the park after dark to prevent drug use and prostitution.

Bryant Park's neighbor, the New York Public Library, made plans for an extensive building expansion in 1979 that also included a renovation of the park. The library commissioned William H. Whyte, an urban planner and sociologist, to explore the influence of design on human behavior and suggest strategic solutions. His work concluded that simple alterations such as removing iron fences and shrubbery would make the space more physically and visually accessible. The master plan created for this project pioneered the use of behavioral research to design a space.

The design plan increases the park's open area to promote community space for interactions. New entrances, ramps, stairs, and walkways throughout the park allow people to freely circulate throughout the space. To increase physical and visual accessibility and enlarge the lawn, hedges that once segmented the space were removed. Along the outside walls of the park, two 300-foot-long planters display perennials and evergreens that add beauty and color without forming a barrier within the space. To improve the social sustainability of the space, the design also

includes public restrooms, concessions, and movable metal chairs, which evoke the sentiment of famous European cities. Formal programming brings the community together for planned events such as movies in the summer and ice skating in the winter.

Throughout the Park, the design incorporates durable, natural, and recycled material. The architect salvaged stone paving and statues for use in the new plan. Historic pieces such as fountains, railings and cast-iron lamps were carefully preserved to maintain the cultural heritage of the site.

The restored park also serves as a green roof for an underground library storage facility, which makes for efficient use of limited city space. The green roof reduces energy costs and greenhouse emissions of the building below.

Before the redesign, Bryant Park was a costly burden for the city, requiring maintenance and safety protection. To relieve the city of this economic liability, Bryant Park is now managed by a private, not-for-profit company originally formed to raise funds for park's restoration. The organization is financed by local merchants, property owners, and neighbors and citizens and oversees park maintenance, security, and programming. As a result of this public-private partnership, Bryant Park now adds value to the local economy. Furthermore, the positive economic impact of the park is felt in the surrounding community through increased real estate values and thriving local businesses.

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Project Resources

LEAD DESIGNER

OLIN

Laurie Olin, FASLA

ARCHITECTS

Davis Brody Bond LLP, library stacks architect

Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates,

kiosks/cafés architect

MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

AltieriSeborWieber LLC

LIGHTING DESIGN

Brandston Partnership, Inc.

MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ENGINEER PLUMBING ENGINEER

Joseph R. Loring & Associates, Inc.

DESIGN OF PERENNIAL BEDS AND HORTICULTURE

Lynden B. Miller Garden Design

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Rosenwasser/Grossman Consulting Engineers, PC

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Tishman Construction Corporation