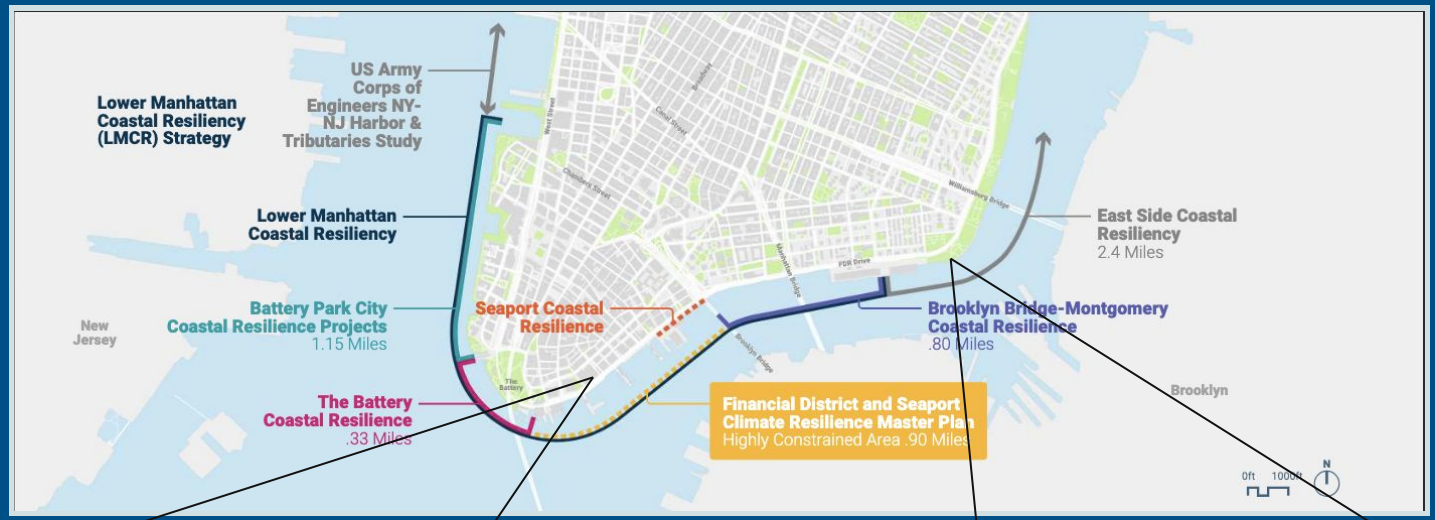
Feasibility Study for a Contiguous East River Waterfront Park

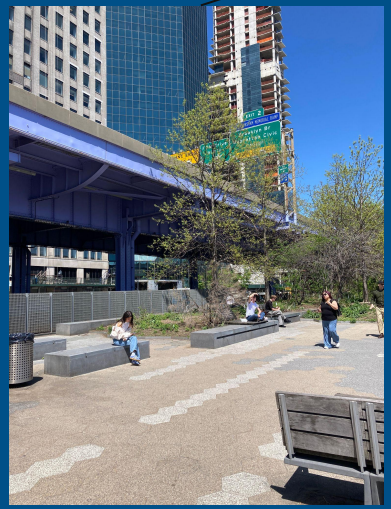
Assessing the viability of different governance structures for a holistic East River Waterfront Park

David Ludwig | Pratt Master of Urban and Community Planning



The Problem









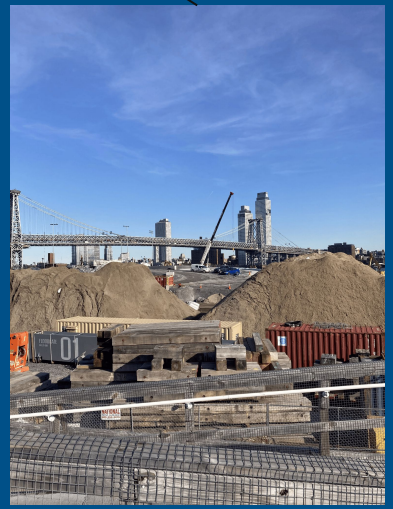
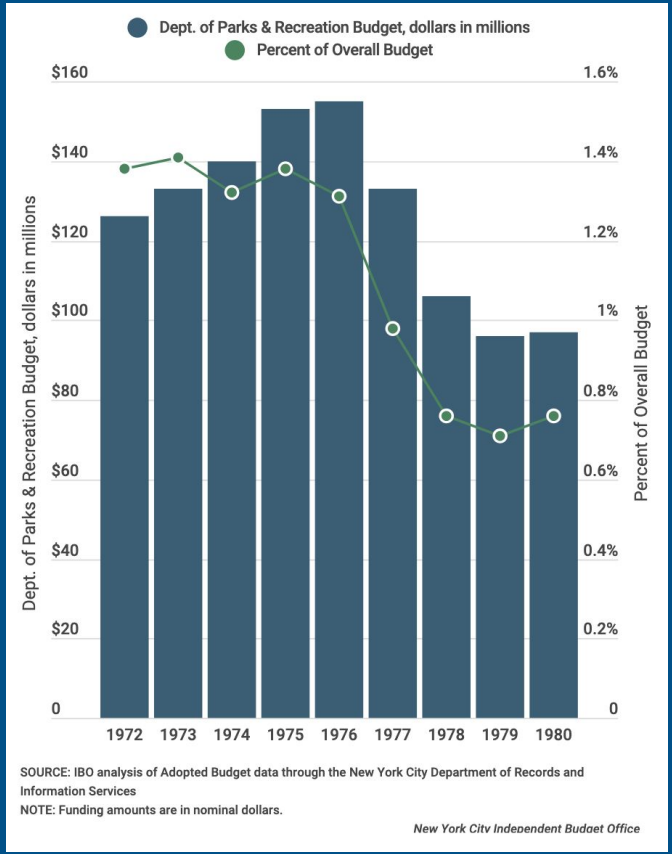


Image Sources top to bottom: EDC; David Ludwig

The Problem

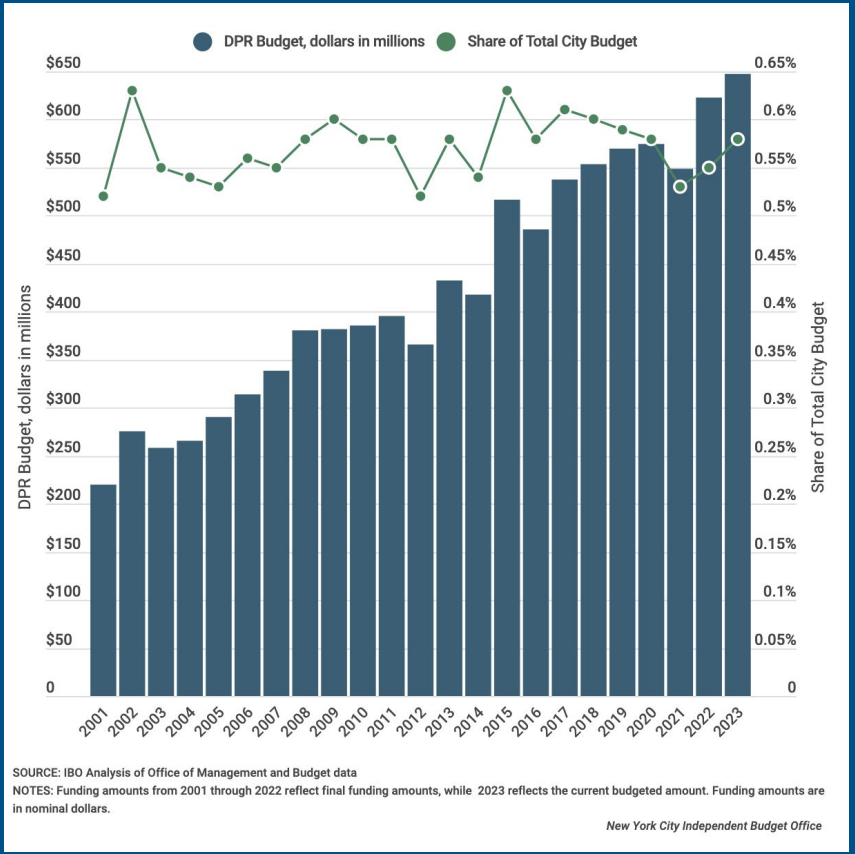
Parks Department Budget vs. Percent of Overall City Budget 1972 - 1980



SOURCE: IBO analysis of Adopted Budget data through the New York City Department of Records and Information Services
NOTE: Funding amounts are in nominal dollars.

New York City Independent Budget Office

Parks Department Budget vs. Percent of Overall City Budget 2001 - 2023



SOURCE: IBO Analysis of Office of Management and Budget data
NOTES: Funding amounts from 2001 through 2022 reflect final funding amounts, while 2023 reflects the current budgeted amount. Funding amounts are in nominal dollars.

New York City Independent Budget Office

Neighborhood Context

Population Change Between 2010 and 2020 in Lower Manhattan

Age Group	2010	2020	Percent Change
Under 18	38,057	40,317	**5.9%**
65+	38,943	52,135	**33.9%**

- Based on census data the number of people under age 18 and over the age of 65 has increased since 2010
- At the same time large portions of the population below 14th street have to travel more than half a mile (about a 10 minute walk) to reach open space that is at least 1 acre in area

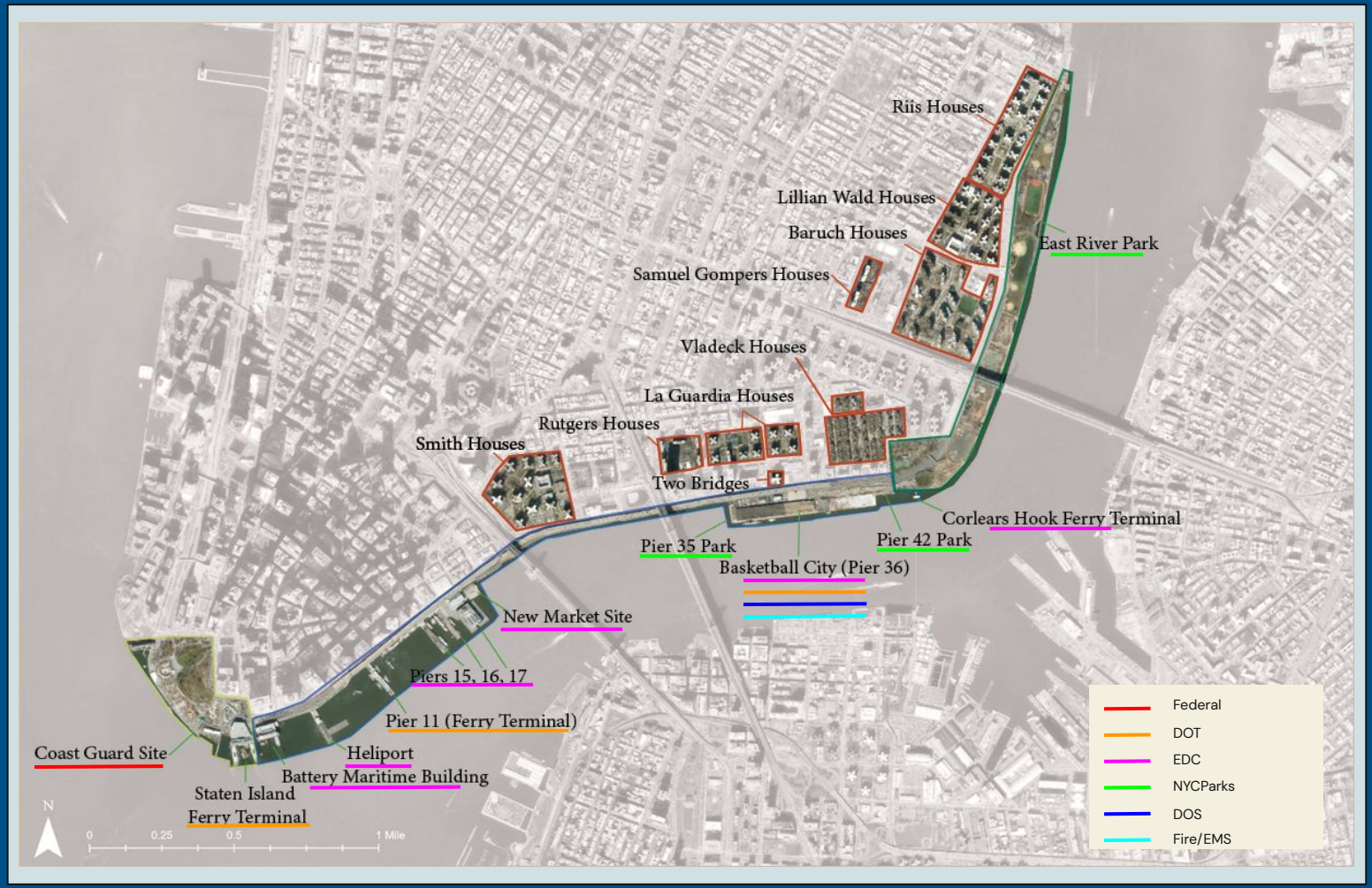
Access to Parks Over 1 Acre in Lower Manhattan



Neighborhood Context



Major Points of Interest



Goals and Methodology

Goals

What parks governance structures are currently in use around the City?

How are these parks accruing revenue?

Which structures provide the most potential benefit for the constituencies of the East River Waterfront?

Methodology

Select case studies based on input from members of the East River Working Group

Analyze governance structures through a study of by-laws and operating agreements

Use 990 tax forms to break down sources of revenue for each case study

Governance Models

Case Studies

- Central Park Conservancy
- Bronx River Alliance
- Hudson River Park Trust*
- Brooklyn Bridge Park

Types of Stewardship Models & Agreements

Simplified Comparison of key Stewardship Models

Model	Functions	Funding	Capacity & Requirements	Equity Considerations
Friends-of Parks *Scale: park*	Park clean-ups, grassroots advocacy	Volunteer	Volunteer-driven	The composition of the group and its functions are often limited to the capabilities and interests of those able to volunteer.
Park Conservancies *Scale: park*	Park operations, maintenance, programming	Fundraise (primarily donor solicitation)	Related to scope of activities, often starting with programming and then growing. Typically requires 501(c)3 status.	Funding often related to degree of affluence in locale, thereby creating disparities across city park system.
Parks Advocacy Organization *Scale: city*	Advocacy, research, lobby on broader park issues	Fundraise	Tends to serve at city level, but can lend additional capacity to local park stewardship groups for specific research, training or activities.	These groups are helpful partners for local park interests, but do not necessarily address specific park equity interests.
Alliance / coalition *Scale: park*	Park advocacy, programming and city coordination	Fundraise (donor solicitation, grants), lobby for public funds	Organizations contribute capacity through Alliance membership; requires coordinator and liaison with City. Related to scope of activities, often starting with advocacy and programming, then growing.	Flat and representative structure ensures comprehensive community voice involved in alliance activities.
Community Development Corporation (CDC) *Scale: neighborhood*	Housing and economic development	Fundraise (donor solicitation, grants	Related to scope of activities, typically starting with housing assistance and then growing. Requires 501(c)3 status.	With a mission to support neighborhood revitalization, CDCs serve a community's most vulnerable.
Business Improvement District (BID) *Scale: neighborhood*	Economic development; public space beautification and activation	Special tax revenue from area property owners	Sizeable workforce to carry out services, programming and capital improvements. Requires 501(c)3 status.	BIDs' funding structure and ultimate responsibility to property owners and business can lead to the organization's bias to those interests.
Local Development Corporation	Economic development and improvement at the neighborhood level	Grants, local, state and federal government	Grants from local, state and federal government, businesses from surrounding community. Requires 501(c)3 status	Tend to have a broader scope than CDCs and can cater to more than one issue as a result. Often composed of community members thus aligned with its interests

Image Source: RebuildByDesign

Central Park Conservancy - Timeline

1970s

Ongoing cuts to the city's budget significantly impact the Parks Department's ability to perform operations and maintenance - Central Park falls into disrepair

1985

Founding of the Central Park Conservancy with the initial goal of supporting the planning, management and interagency support of the park

1990

CPC completes a comprehensive plan for the full restoration and management of Central Park.

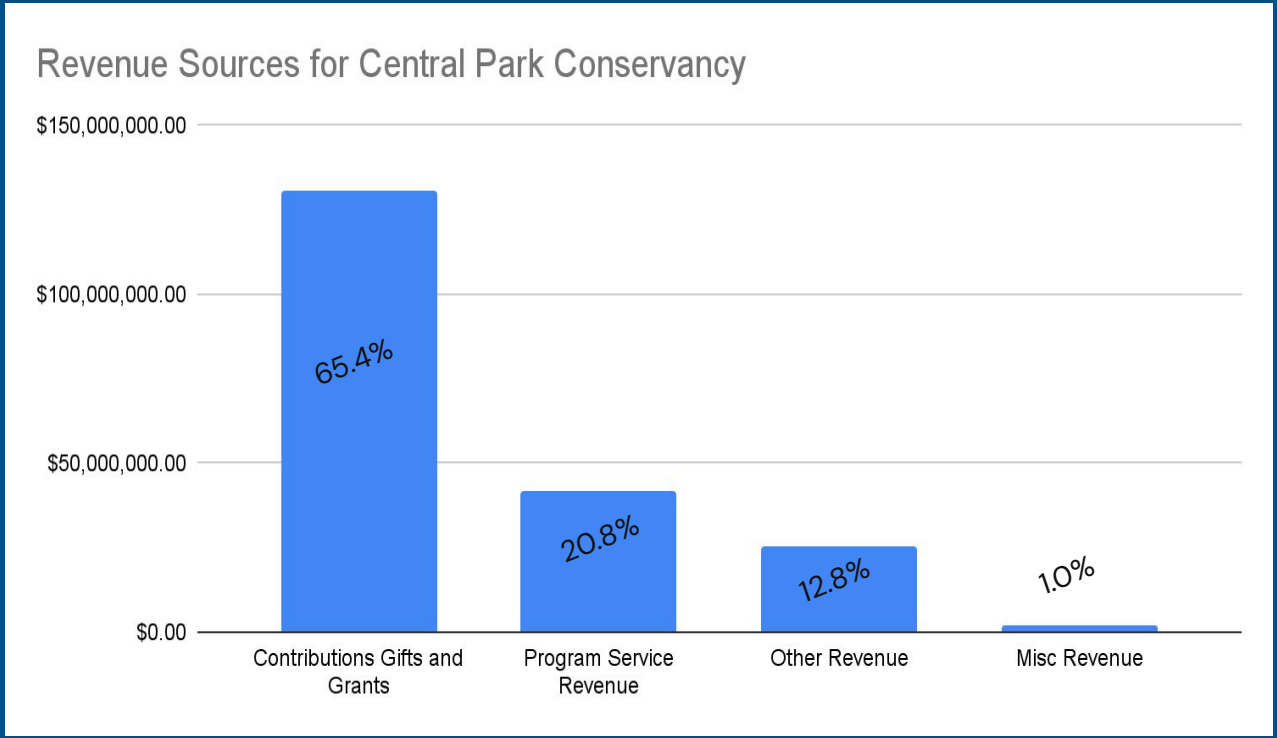
1991

Further cuts to the Parks Department lead the Conservancy to taking on a greater role in fundraising for ongoing maintenance, supplementing the City's budget shortfall

1998

The Conservancy and Parks Dept. sign an agreement handing over management of the park to the conservancy. Responsibilities include fundraising, O and M and management of capital projects among others

CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY



Total Revenue (23/24)

$200 million

843 acres = $237,476/acre per year

- Contributions, gifts and grants

  $130.8 million

- Program service revenue

  $41.7 million

- Other revenue

  $25.5 million

Bronx River Alliance - Timeline

1974

Activists take it upon themselves to begin cleanup of the Bronx River - removing industrial debris - after local environmental groups determine that it is unsuitable for drinking, swimming or any other recreational activity

1980

Bronx River Restoration publishes the Bronx River Restoration Master Plan providing the seeds for the idea of a contiguous Bronx River Greenway

1997

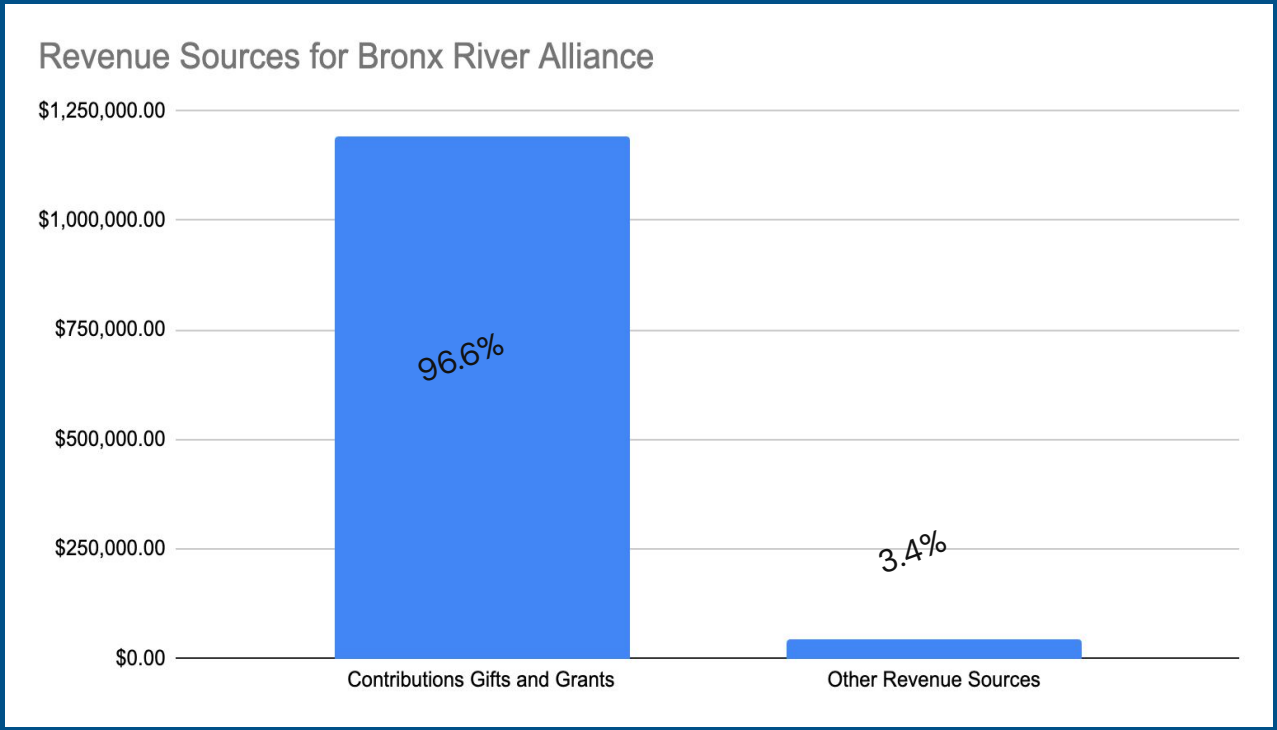
The Bronx River Working Group is formed through a join effort between the City Parks Foundation and NYC Parks Dept. whose goal is to support restoration of and education around the Bronx River. It is composed of 60 community orgs, businesses and public agencies

2001

The Working Group forms the Bronx River Alliance as a 501(c)(3). The Alliance works in partnership with the NYC Parks Dept.

2021

Since its establishment the Alliance has raised over 100 million dollars for restoration and added 22 acres of parkland to the Greenway



Total Revenue (20/21)

$1.23 million

44 acres = $27,272/acre per year

- Contributions, Gifts and Grants

  $1.19 Million

- Investment and other Miscellaneous Income

  $38 thousand

Hudson River Park Trust - Timeline

1973

The collapse of a 60 foot section of the West Side Highway near Gansevoort Street, brings attention to the West Side waterfront's decline

1974

The City and State release a plan to fill 234 acres between Chambers and 36th st. to be topped with residential development and a park. This plan would eventually be scrapped due to cost and environmental concerns

1992

Years of deliberation around a new plan culminate in an announcement by Mayor Dinkins and Governor Cuomo of commercial development at Chelsea Piers, pier 40 and pier 76 to support the park

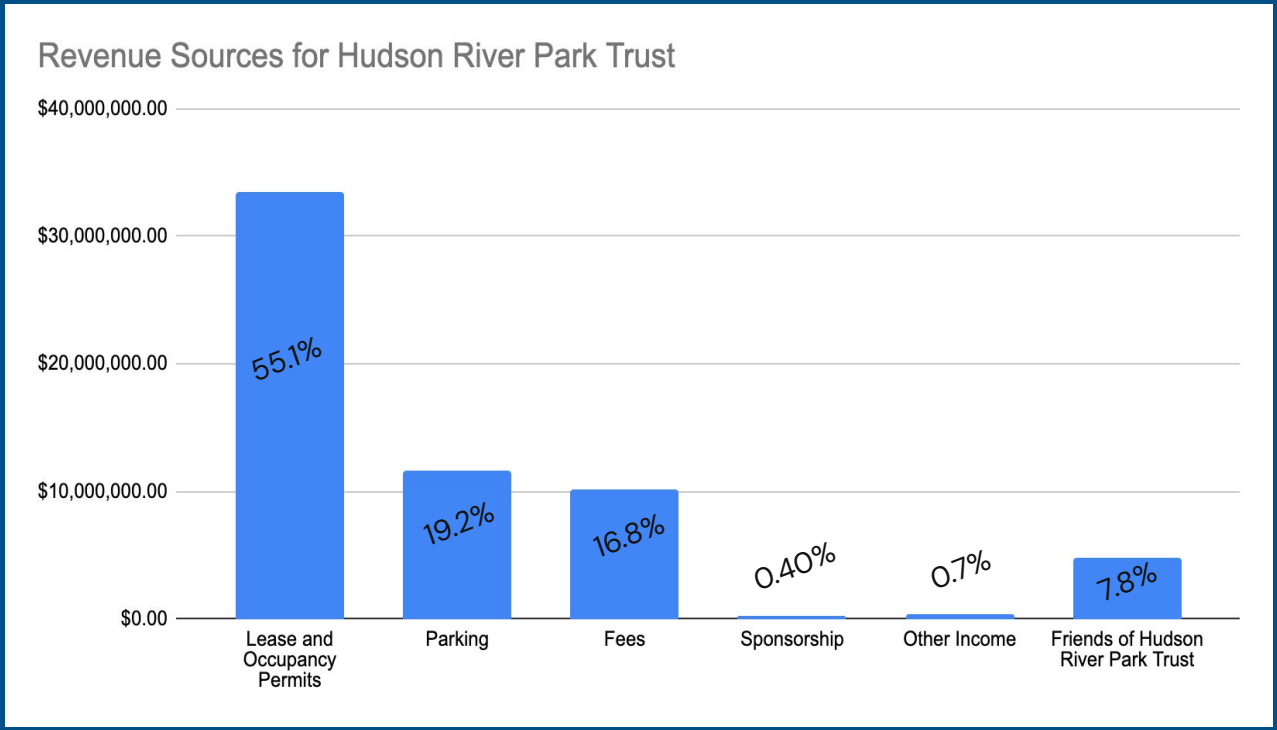
1998

Legislation is signed by Governor Pataki which allocates land owned by the State and City for the park as well as the creation of the Trust to whom the land is leased to

2013

The Trust, finding itself in debt, is allowed to sell air rights from a property adjacent to the park, enabling some commercial development in or near the park to improve it's available funding

HUDSON RIVER PK



Total Revenue (22/23)

$55.9 million

550 acres = $101,669/acre per year

- Lease and Occupancy Permits

  $24.8 million

- Parking and Fees

  $21.7 million

- Friends of Hudson River Park Trust

  $12.3 million

Brooklyn Bridge Park - Timeline

1984

The Port Authority of NY and NJ seek to sell the then abandoned piers 1-6 for commercial development - Groups led by the Brooklyn Heights Association seek to oppose this sale and convert the piers into park land

1988

Members of the Brooklyn Heights Association vote 12 to 0 to endorse the idea of a “Harbor Park” on piers 1-6 to preserve views and prevent the full privatization of the waterfront - ultimately succeeding in their original goal

2002

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation is founded via an MOU between Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg. Funding came from the City and State after which the park would have to be financially self-sufficient

2006

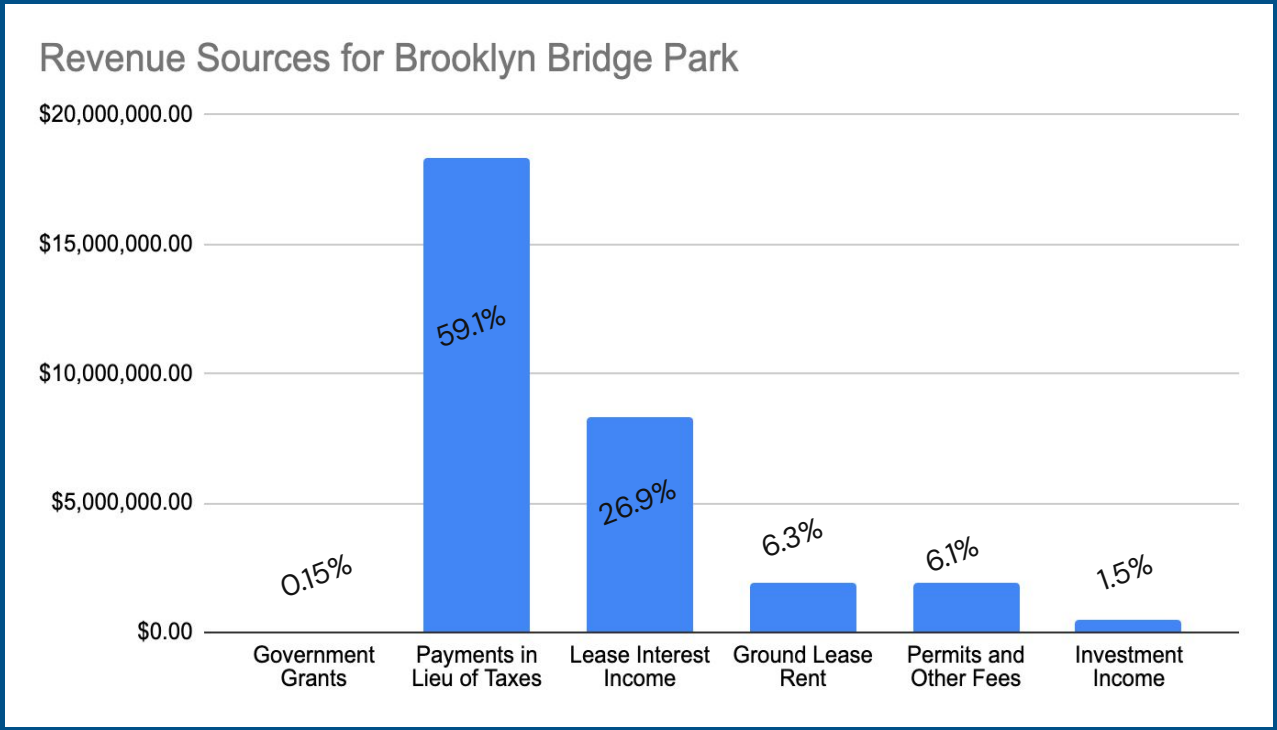
Brooklyn Bridge Park Legal Defense Fund loses and lawsuit to the New York State Urban Development Corp. which sets the precedent that the GPP and not the MOU defined the extent of the park land

2010

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Community Advisory Council holds its first meeting. It advises the BBPDC however its recommendations are non-binding

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

PARK



Total Revenue (22/23)

$30.1 million

85 acres = $364,428/acre per year

- Payments in Lieu of Taxes

  $18.3 million

- Lease Interest Income

  $8.3 million

- Ground Lease Rent, Permits and Other Fees

  $3.8 million

Synthesizing the Data

Central Park Conservancy

- Management of City owned land transferred to a **private non-profit**
- Tasked with fundraising, O and M, programming, events, and design, bidding and supervision of capital projects
- Vast majority of **revenue** derived from **individual contributions**
- **53 trustees** - 5 ex officio, 5 mayoral appointments, the rest selected by majority vote
- **2 of the 53** trustees represent the interests of the **surrounding community**

Bronx River Alliance

- **Formal partnership with NYCParks** established in 2001 acting as a liaison between the public and private sphere
- Tasked with **restoration, educational programming and creating recreation opportunities** as well as organizational policy, fundraising, election of board members and annual reports
- **25 member board** with 8 members **appointed by internal teams** - education, ecology, greenway and outreach - other members appointed by 2/3rds majority vote

Brooklyn Bridge Park

- BBP Development Corporation **created** through an **MOU between the City and State**
- All **revenues** generated from **commercial development within the park** dedicated to O and M
- **14 of 17 members** of the Board appointed by **Mayor, deputy Mayor and Mayor of HED**
- **35 member advisory council** established in 2010 - recommendations are **non-binding**

Hudson River Park Trust

- Created through an act of **State legislation**
- Delegated design, development, and O and M to the Trust
- Over half of **revenue** derived from **lease and occupancy permits and parking fees** - this revenue goes towards O and M by law
- **13 member board** with 5 appointed by the **Governor** and 3 by the **Manhattan Borough President**
- **40 member advisory council** represents the interests of the community and advises the trust on their concerns - city and state have equal representation - 5 members each - **recommendations are non-binding**

SWOT Analysis - East River

Strengths

- The **17 acre East River Waterfront** represents is a vital artery for connection
- Available active and passive recreation spaces are well maintained and cater to **a range of age groups**
- Based on interviews - **EDC is looking for a trusted local partner**
- Multiple **strong, established community** advocacy **groups**

Weaknesses

- **Amenities are concentrated** to one asset rather than opportunities for recreation being spread out
- **Active and passive recreation** spaces are **disconnected** from one another
- Sources of **revenue** either go to the **City's general fund or to private tenants**
- **Coastal resilience work** is badly needed and will **deactivate** large swaths of the area
- **Indoor recreation** spaces are completely **absent** from the Waterfront making **winter activity impossible**

Opportunities

- Connecting the whole area would **alleviate pressure** on available spaces
- Any group that is created can enshrine **community control** from the get-go
- **Air rights** over piers could serve as a potential source of capital
- **New Market Site** near pier 17 is ideal for a community focused **recreation space**
- **Revenues** generated at the Battery Maritime Building,, pier 11, 15, 36 and the Seaport Marketplace amount to **$4 million**

Threats

- **Self sufficiency** will require identifying **sources of revenue**
- **Federal funding** for coastal resilience may not materialize given the **current administration**
- **Interruptions** in service as part of **Coastal Resiliency Efforts** threaten to **pause** certain sources of potential **revenue**
- **Neighborhoods** being **pitted against each other** leading to **segmentation and competition** for limited resources

Observations