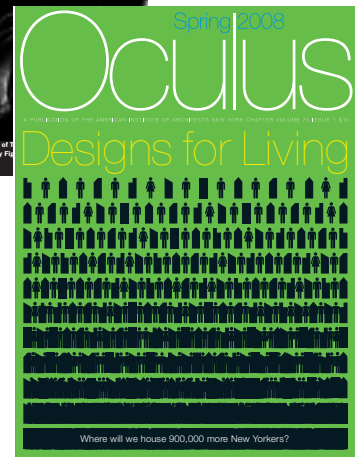


# Oculus

A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS NEW YORK CHAPTER

No City in the world is home to as many internationally prominent architects, interior designers, engineers and schools of architecture as New York. No magazine reports on New York architects' activities as thoroughly and intriguingly as *Oculus*.



## Great Spaces in Public Places

How PlaNYC 2030 is transforming parks and waterways, bringing more fun to Fun City by Charles McKinney, AIA, ASLA

There are two construction types you cannot build overnight: parks and infrastructure. Unlike other architectural endeavors, they demand long-term foresight. Fortunately, New York City has a solid track record of planning for future generations. Its academies, advisors, and Central Park were all constructed long before most people thought they would be needed. Long-term thinking makes possible the best city New Yorkers enjoy today.

So when you look at Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC, you realize with a shock that its 2030 target date is only 22 years away. That's a blink in time when you consider how long it takes to get a park to clean up a stretch of contaminated land, or, if you're at all, to accommodate the recreation and transit demands of a million new visitors.

**NYC Parks & Recreation: Calvert Vaux Park schematic**

**Walking the walk**

The first park on the construction schedule is Calvert Vaux Park in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, now a collection of athletic fields and parking lots on land left from the Manhattan Bridge. Central Park, N.Y.C.'s Parks Department landscape architect, sculpted the park to create a hill and a rehabilitated shoreline. To cool the air and clean the storm water, trees and gardens will surround sports fields and a parking lot.

**Wicks - New Architecture: Rockaway Park concept illustration**

PlaNYC also includes goals to:

- Ensure that all New Yorkers live within a 10-minute walk of a park
- Clean 20% of our waterways for recreation
- Upgrade our energy infrastructure
- Reduce global-warming emissions by more than 30%

The plan shifts responsibilities and relationships to every city department. The Parks Department has received \$207 million to complete eight underdeveloped parks, light 36 athletic fields to extend playing time, convert 20 athletic fields to synthetic turf, create 800 new Greenways, restore 1,000 acres of rivers with planted banks, and plant one million new trees over the next decade.

**Expanding green assets**

Since many neighborhoods suffer from a shortage of parks and well-maintained parks is liberating the use of existing facilities, a supplementary design process will convert unused automobiles to landscaped parks. The department plans to open 200 neighborhoods to the public by the end of 2030, giving every neighborhood a park within a 10-minute walk.

**NYC Parks & Recreation: McCann Pool concept illustration**

After it closed in 1984, most people believed the football field-sized McCann Park pool in Greenpoint/Williamsburg, designed by Arno Gribory in 1926, would never reopen. Now, Rogers Marant Architects and Jan Fried Pokorny Associates are designing a new McCann Pool. It promises to be a versatile center city of recreation and social gathering for a growing Polish community and young professionals. The pool will provide dining, ice swimming, water-ski events, surfing, and a venue for sitting and soaking in the summer and ice skating in the winter.

Landscape architect M&P Associates are designing Queen Beech Park on the Atlantic shore of Staten Island, providing sports fields and a cross-country trail. It protects the sand dunes and wetlands, connect to adjacent natural areas, and absorb storm water. Stage and Counter Architects is working on an urban competitive track, the first track to elevate the building over the parking lot to capture ocean breezes and sparkling views.

Starting in planning improvements for Fort Washington Park in Upper Manhattan, a remnant of the original Hudson shoreline, punctuated by the security Life Line Lighthouse. The company plans to entangle a meandering system of access routes, since the neighborhood is cut off from the park by rails and highways, and most users arrive on buses from the south.

Thomas Seibel Associates will design Southside Park on the Bronx River. Despite its sweeping views of Long Island Sound, Southside suffers from invasive vegetation and a history of illegal dumping. Community members expressed alarm over soil contamination and requested more active recreation, ecological restoration, access to the river, and improved security. Plans expect to deal with all of these concerns.

At the western end of the Rockaway Peninsula, the plan is to reinvent Rockaway Park. The ocean is lapped at the park and Parko has already covered two surfing beaches and facilities for ocean diving. The work of Quarmel Fitzhugh & Partners and Wicks - New Architecture is busy to restore stone and local on new forms of recreation, including an adventure course and a slide beach.

The legendary High Bridge, the 1948 stone arch bridge designed by John D. Stone and James Bennett Jr., spans the Harlem River and once brought water to Manhattan from the Croton Aqueduct. Soon it will bring hikers and bikers to Manhattan and the Bronx on the restored Croton Aqueduct trail.

Meanwhile, in Brooklyn's Ridgewood/Glendale neighborhood, where the Highland Reservoir is surrounded by 20-foot-tall rampparks, Mark W. Morrison Associates has mapped the underused habitat and identified invasive vegetation. This hidden place plays a role in the regional ecology and migration routes of birds. It's also one of the only sites to provide active recreation in a part of Brooklyn that is notoriously underused.

These projects are part of the largest investment in the city's parks since the 1930s, notes Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adam Stein. In the last year alone, Parks has opened more than 200 new or renovated facilities, an average of four per week.

**Charles McKinney, AIA, ASLA, is Chief of Design of Capital Projects for the Parks Department of the City of New York. His task is to provide design direction for landscape and architecture projects throughout the five boroughs.**

**Left: Michael van Heylandt; photo: Alan Hink; photo: playground access; grounds underdeveloped areas (right below); NYC's new developments parks**

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