

Recreation MANAGEMENT

IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR RECREATION, SPORTS AND FITNESS FACILITIES



Parks

Growing Green Space

Various Locations in New York City

New York City has long been known as the "concrete jungle." However, the metropolis today is known frequently as "The Green City" and "The City of Trees." This is due to efforts to renovate and upgrade the city's thousands of parks. Specifically, the parks have evolved to provide more than just open space for leisure and recreation. Parks present communities with a platform for economic development, community revitalization, social engagement, safer neighborhoods, and educational and cultural programs. Other benefits parks provide are environmental, like stormwater collection and cleaner air, as well as improved physical and psychological health of surrounding communities. Led by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks), the city sustains thriving parks and public green spaces, and brings these benefits to nearly 8.6 million New Yorkers.

"NYC Parks oversees the largest parks program in the United States, covering approximately 30,000 acres of land—that equates to 14 percent of the city," explained Gene McGarry, project director at Hill International Inc. McGarry and the Hill team have managed and delivered more than 75 construction and renovation projects for NYC Parks, totaling more than \$500 million since 2007. Hill's work ranges from construction management related to renovating and rejuvenating current park facilities to demolishing and rebuilding new parks complete with paving, plazas, lighting, fencing, landscaping, ballfields, and tennis and basketball courts, among other amenities.

"Our team has partnered with NYC Parks through two different administrations," McGarry said. "Under Mayor Bloomberg, we provided construction management services for a major expansion of the city's park system, opening new recreational facilities in all five boroughs. Currently, under Mayor de Blasio, our focus is renovating and rejuvenating as many of the City's existing parks as possible."

While the nature of each project is unique, each park aligns with NYC Parks' vision to create and sustain more resilient parks for all communities, one project at a time.

Hill provided construction management services to NYC Parks for renovation work at the historic Union Square Park in Manhattan, one of the city's best-known and most widely used parks.

The city, in conjunction with Union Square Partnership, set aside private donations and city funds totaling more than \$17 million for the renovation, beautification, and improvement of Union Square North. The renovation revitalized Union Square Park by improving its accessibility and usability. The renovation project included streetscape improvements that included new light poles, street trees, bollards, bluestone, asphalt pavers, granite curbs and planting of new trees. The project also included creation of a new state-of-the-art playground, three times the size of the original play space constructed on a single elevation.



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The historic pavilion building was restored and expanded to include public restrooms, improved maintenance and storage facilities. The pavilion was renovated to accommodate a restaurant with a new kitchen facility. An ADA-compliant comfort station was constructed next to the pavilion. The area north of the pavilion received decorative paving and new services for electrical and water, which allow the Greenmarket to reduce the use of gas-powered generators. Hill provided complete construction management services for the project. As a Wicks Law project, Hill also supervised four separate contractors. The construction required coordination with both the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Department of Transportation.

For a synthetic turf ballfields project, NYC Parks transformed multipurpose asphalt fields into synthetic turf. The \$18 million project included a new synthetic multipurpose turf field, curb and pavement improvements and newly added fencing, benches, water fountains and plantings. The new synthetic turf hosts a greater range of games than the asphalt surface could accommodate, including contact sports, and eliminates the use of lawn mowers and pesticides to provide cost savings.

Through the Schoolyards to Playgrounds Program, NYC Parks awarded multiple consultant supervision contracts totaling more than \$9 million in construction costs. The renovation, beautification and improvements to these schoolyards enhances their accessibility, and allows the surrounding community to use the spaces more actively during after-school and weekend hours. These playground improvements include tree and shrub bed plantings, seating areas consisting of traditional and custom benches, custom metal shade structures, game tables, color seal interpretive graphics, new athletic courts, synthetic turf, new play equipment, spray features and accessible drinking fountains.

The \$23.8 million Rockaway Beach Regional Park Project focused on park property that was never fully developed. The PlaNYC initiative presented an opportunity to use the beachfront setting for much needed park facilities in the growing residential community. The redeveloped parks achieved several sustainability benefits, including stormwater collection, urban heat island reduction and permeable surfaces. Improvements made to existing facilities included playgrounds, sports courts and passive recreation space. In the East Park, a large parking lot was transformed into a rolling lawn for passive recreation and viewing events at a new performance venue. In the West Park, the site consists of a new comfort station, water play area and synthetic turf field. Natural habitats and coastal dunes in the Rockaway Peninsula are also being protected and enhanced, and the project includes extensive tree plantings to provide shaded areas.

Many NYC Parks programs focus on increasing park accessibility. The \$50 million Framework for an Equitable Future restores and creates thriving public spaces for all New Yorkers, with an emphasis on connecting neighborhoods and improving community health. The Community Parks Initiative is renovating 67 parks in neighborhoods with higher-than-average concentrations of poverty with its \$318 million program, and Parks Without Borders' \$50 million program helps to make parks more open, welcoming and beautiful by improving entrances, edges and park-adjacent spaces.

Hill continues to partner with NYC Parks on a wealth of projects, including Riverside Park South, Melrose Commons, Lyons Square, Bowne Playground, Grassmere Playground, and Louis Simeone Park. Other recently awarded projects comprise the Rockaway Beach Handball Courts, Seward Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park Henry Hudson Entrance and Van Cortlandt Park Playground.

"We are seeing more green space integrated within the city's infrastructure, as well as more data to illustrate the benefits of having parks closer to residents' homes," McGarry said. "Our team is proud to help build parks that are more accessible and encourage interaction, and we look forward to continuing a path toward a greener city."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

NYC Parks: www.nycgovparks.org

Hill International Inc.: www.hillintl.com



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