Effective Crime Prevention in New York City, USA

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Introduction:

The use and control of public space has been a subject of contention between citizens and city officials, neighborhood associations and entrepreneurs, activists and politicians. This issue has brought to the fore several opposing arguments about the spatial politics of the city. This case focuses on New York City (NYC), which once had one of the highest crime rates in the United States. Several redevelopment and revitalization projects, as well as public policy changes in recent years, are credited with the reduction of fear and overall improvement of quality of life. After 30 years of declining crime statistics, NYC is home to several vibrant gathering places within the urban area attracting tourists and residents alike.

One could argue that most problems in rundown areas of NYC are related to the urban pathology identified by Wilson and Kelling,[i] who coined the term "broken windows." Their theory argues that serious crime can be reduced by targeting disorderly behavior and conditions and thus, by fixing up rundown areas, urban decay can be avoided and crime can be reduced. To specifically illustrate effective strategies in NYC, this case analyzes Bryant Park, in Midtown Manhattan, once a dangerous, crime infested place, but now regarded as a great example of urban space revitalization. The restoration of Bryant Park provides an example of how combining strategies, such as the broken windows theory, with innovative public-private financing schemes can control criminal activity.

In the early 1980s, a private, non-profit corporation proposed to take responsibility for the restoration, maintenance and management of Bryant Park. Controversies involving the control of the public realm developed during the project.[ii] While the corporation intended to make the park a clean, pleasant and safe place for citizens, social activists and civil liberties associations wanted to maintain the right of all citizens, without distinction of race or socio-economic status, to use and frequent public spaces. Spatial exclusion has been a concern not only in Bryant Park, but other public areas that have been redeveloped in the last 25 years.[iii]

## Why New York City is a Good Case Study in Crime/Crime Prevention

New York City, with over eight million people, is not only the largest urban area in the US, it is considered a global city. In the last 30 years, declining rates of population growth coincided with increasing crime (Figures 1 and 2), but with decreasing crime rates in the 1980s and 1990s, the city is now recognized as a good example of a city that has recovered and today offers its citizens an urban area that is much safer than it used to be 20 years ago.

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[i] James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982

[ii] Ralph Blumenthal, "And Now a Private Midtown 'Police Force'," *The New York Times*, August 22, 1989, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition

[iii] Jeff Ferrell. "Remapping the City: Public Identity, Cultural Space, and Social Justice," *Contemporary Justice Review* 4(2) (2001): 161-180

**Figure 1: Population Growth in New York City, 1970 - 2005**
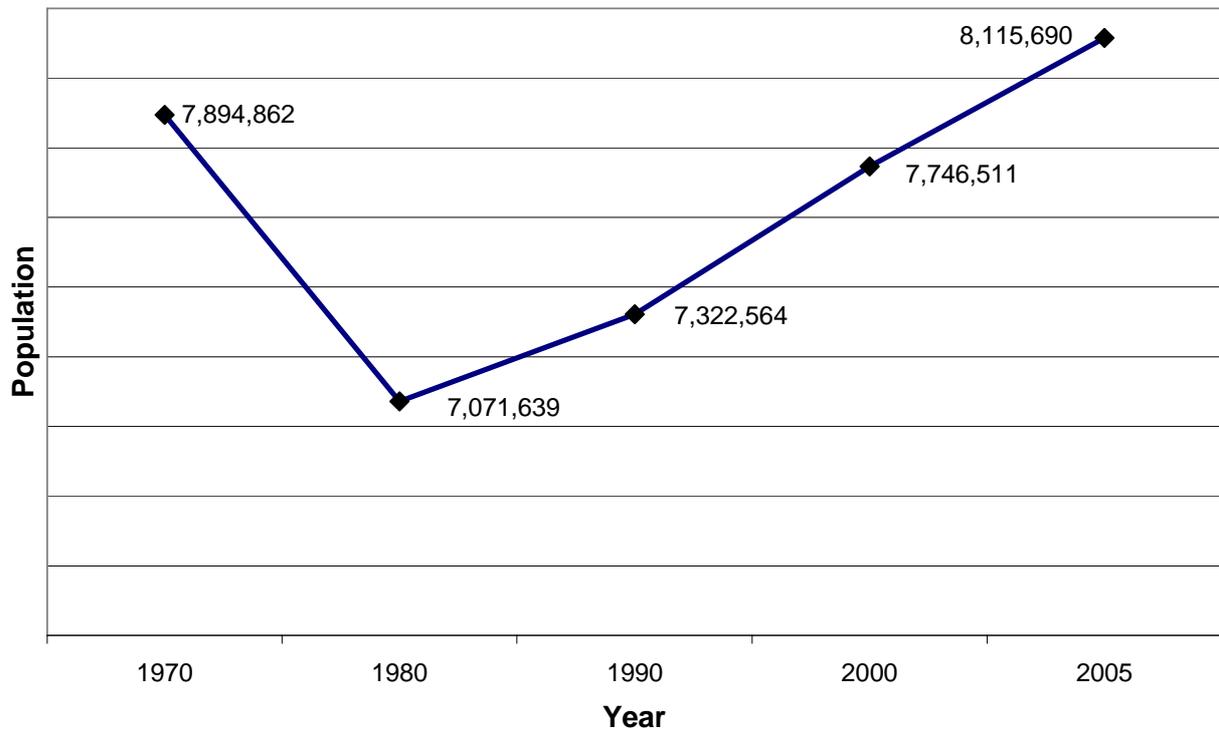
Source: US Census Bureau, various years (tabulated by author).

The decline in crime rates is not unique to NYC; criminal activity declined all over the country in the 1990s. A report using data from police estimates and from two national indicators of crime—the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)—compared crime in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles and found that overall crime had declined in the 1980s and 1990s in the three largest metropolitan areas.[iv] This drop puzzled criminologists, sociologists and others who predicted crime would rise given demographic trends. Some connections between improved economic conditions and police tactics have been established; however, most correlations are not strong or consistent enough to explain declining crime rates in wealthy and poor, large and small cities alike.[v]

[iv]   Janet L. Lauritsen and Robin J. Schaum, "Crime and Victimization in the Three Largest Metropolitan Areas, 1980-98," Bureau of Justice Statistics, Technical Report. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2005, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cv3lma98.pdf (accessed September 19, 2006).

[v]   George L. Kelling, "Why Did People Stop Committing Crimes? An Essay about Criminology and Ideology," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28 (2000): 567-586.

NYC offers an interesting case study for the national drop in criminal activity because it has ostensibly implemented policies that call for more aggressive enforcement of misdemeanor laws, along the lines of broken windows theory, with the objective of decreasing "quality of life" crimes through "order maintenance" policing.[vi] In addition, redevelopment projects to revitalize neighborhoods that had become breeding grounds for both petty and violent crime, show that not only controls, but also services can change and shape behavior.[vii]

Figure 2 : Crime Statistics, New York City, 1970 - 2005
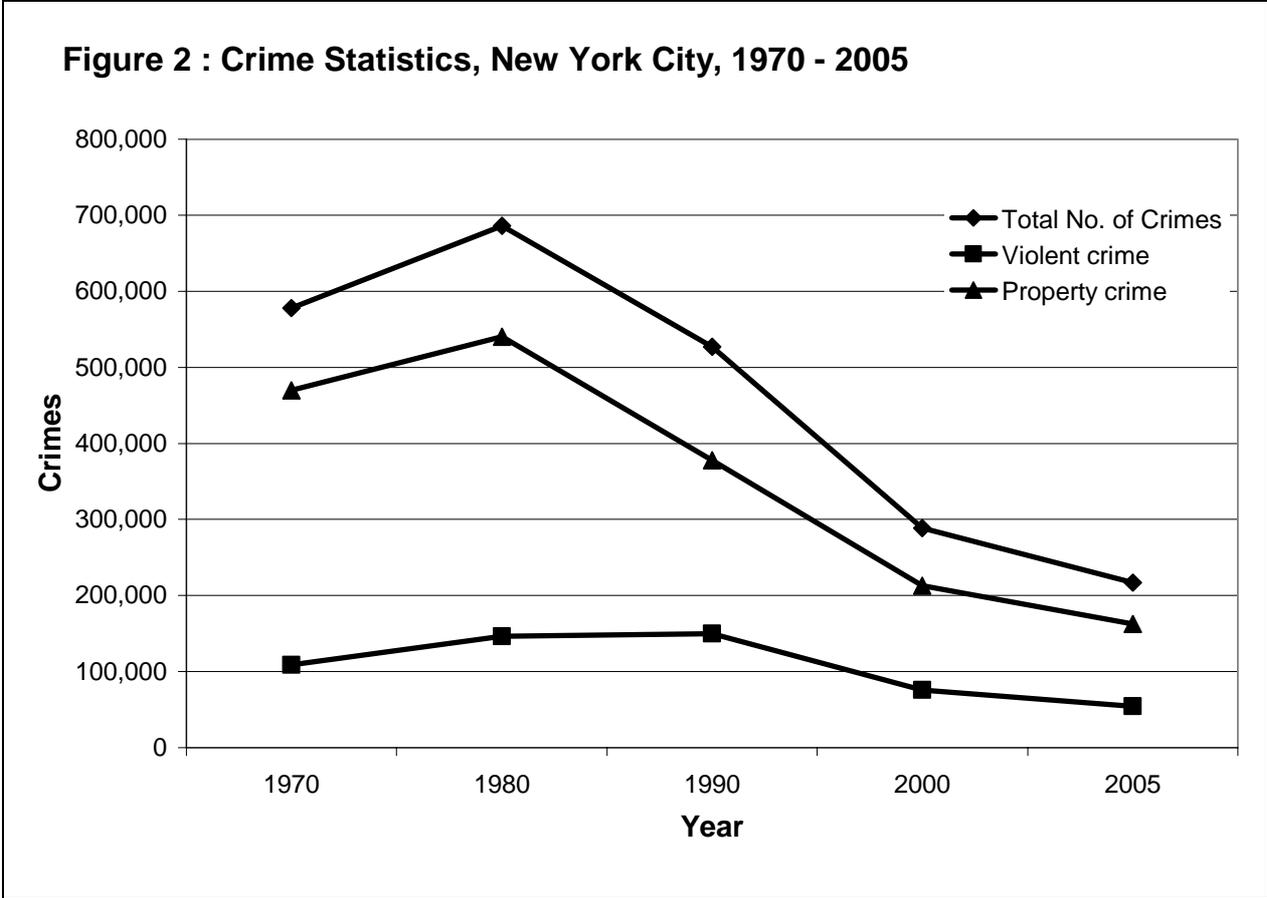
Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, various years (tabulated by author).

[vi]   Bernard E. Harcourt and Jens Ludwig, "Broken Windows: New Evidence from New York City and a Five-City Social Experiment," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 73 (2006): 272

[vii]   George L. Kelling, "Why Did People Stop Committing Crimes? An Essay about Criminology and Ideology," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28 (2000): 567-586

Background and Context

Midtown Manhattan used to be a vibrant entertainment district at the turn of the 20th century. NYC had experienced the same decline that most cities in the US experienced after World War II and after the war it continued losing population. In Midtown Manhattan, several restaurants, bars, and theatres closed and adult entertainment houses opened, particularly in the Times Square area. This led to an increased presence of prostitutes and homeless people; drug dealers followed suit. The decline of the district caused New Yorkers and tourists alike to avoid it, particularly after dark.

A revitalization process started during the 1980s. With sponsorship from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a public-private partnership was established, the non-profit Bryant Park Restoration Corporation (BPRC), which embarked on a long journey to transform Bryant Park and its surrounding area. The redevelopment process of blighted areas in NYC spearheaded by public-private partnerships initiated a trend of privatization of public services. NYC started relying on private firms to not only restore and maintain, but also provide security in public spaces.[viii]

Public-Private Partnerships

A growing number of cities in the US have turned to the private sector to help law enforcement agencies control violent crime. Several non-profit corporations have been involved in activities traditionally entrusted to the public sector. The crime prevention strategy most often used by these organizations is based on the broken windows theory. Vindevogel[ix] calls this an "innovative and non-confrontational approach" and argues that it explains the fact that police departments and local governments are not only tolerating, but sometimes encouraging the "intrusion" of private security into public space.

In 1989, a privately financed venture to support the efforts of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) was initiated in Midtown Manhattan.[x] Commercial property owners in these areas voted to impose a surtax on themselves to pay for security services, organized by a security force serving two public-private coalitions, the Grand Central Partnership and the BPRC. The uniformed, unarmed guards have been instrumental in keeping order in the area. They receive training but do not get involved in police action, and even though they do not have police powers, their presence alone is a deterrent. This concept has spread to other NYC neighborhoods.

Law Enforcement

NYC has the largest police department in the US: in 2005 there were over 53,000 full-time law enforcement employees; 68 percent of them officers and 32 percent civilians. According to the FBI, there were 54,623 instances of violent crime and 162,509 incidents of property crime in

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[viii]   Sophie Body-Gendrot, "The Politics of Urban Crime," *Urban Studies*, 38 (5-6) (2001): 915-928

[ix]   Franck Vindevogel, "Private security and urban crime mitigation: A bid for BIDs," *Criminal Justice: International Journal of Policy & Practice,* 5 (3) (Aug 2005): 233

[x]   Ralph Blumenthal, "And Now a Private Midtown 'Police Force'," *The New York Times*, August 22, 1989, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition

NYC in 2005.[xi] These numbers represent 73 percent of the violent crime and 53 percent of the property crime in the State of New York. Still, violent crime has been declining in NYC, particularly in Manhattan, for 30 years.[xii] [xiii] The murder rate in Manhattan is the lowest since records started being kept in 1937. The number of homicides is the lowest since 1963; robberies, rapes and felonious assaults have all declined by over 50 percent since 1975. The US Department of Justice reported a 46 percent drop in violent crimes in cities with more than one million residents between 1990 and 2000; in NYC that drop was 60 percent.[xiv] According to NYPD data, citywide crime declined 75 percent between 1990 and 2005 (Table 1).[xv]

Table 1: Historical Crime Statistics for the City of New York, 1990 – 2006

	1990	**1995**	**1998**	**2001**	**2006**	**% change 2005-1990**
Murder	2,262	1,181	629	649	596	-73.6
Rape	3,126	3,018	2,476	1,930	1,498	-52.0
Robbery	100,280	59,733	39,003	27,873	23,542	-76.5
Felonious Assault	44,122	35,528	28,848	23,020	17,080	-61.2
Burglary	122,055	75,649	47,181	32,694	22,909	-81.2
Grand Larceny	108,487	65,425	51,461	46,291	46,430	-57.2
Grand Larceny Auto	146,925	71,798	43,315	29,607	15,737	-89.2
Total	**527,257**	**312,332**	**212,913**	**162,064**	**127,792**	**-75.76**

Source: NYPD, Police Department, City of New York, CompStat, vol.14, no. 8

New York's law enforcement system has been completely reorganized. In 1995, the Transit Police and the Housing Police were incorporated into NYPD; previously, conditions in the subway system were appalling, causing thousands of citizens to stop using transit, and corruption and lack of accountability among police were crippling law enforcement.[xvi] New policies and strategies improved the whole system, but were blamed for the increased aggressiveness of NYC's police force. Some argue that the use of force is excessive because

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xi   FBI Releases its 2005 Crime Statistics, http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm Tables 1, 8, 29, 78, http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/about/crime_summary.html (accessed September 18, 2006)

xii   Richard Curtis, "The Improbable Transformation of Inner-City Neighborhoods: Crime, Violence, Drugs, and Youth in the 1990s," *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 88(4) (1998): 1233-1276

xiii   Jeffrey Toobin, "The Upstart," *New Yorker Magazine*, May 16, 2005, The Political Scene.

xiv   US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/pdlc00.txt (accessed September 18, 2006)

xv   NYPD Crime statistics, http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/pdf/chfdept/cscity.pdf, weekly report including statistics going back 1, 2, 6, and 14 years

xvi   George L. Kelling, "Why Did People Stop Committing Crimes? An Essay about Criminology and Ideology," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28 (2000): 577

NYPD believes the public perceives aggressive policing as an effective way to combat crime.[xvii]

The "zero tolerance" strategy, touted by the media as the responsible for decline in criminal activity, has also been blamed for an increase in police aggressiveness, particularly when dealing with minorities.[xviii] Silverman and Della-Giustina argue that zero tolerance policing usually leads to more aggressive action and "crackdowns." In their opinion, "[z]ero tolerance can slide into intolerance—the pursuit of public spaces free of fear must not mutate into violations of citizens' private space."[xix]   Widely publicized incidents such as the Louima and the Diallo cases[xx] called attention to police tactics and brought about complaints from not only community leaders and minority organizations, but also other police officers;[xxi] however, these incidents seem to have been "tragedies, not trends."[xxii] No studies to date have established causality between tougher policing and declining crime rates.

Bryant Park – Case Study

The nine-acre area known as Bryant Park has been through many cycles of splendor and decline. In times of decline, it has been called a "dump-heap" and "a disgrace to the city"[xxiii] and "one of the city's most frustrating open spaces."[xxiv] The presence of drug dealers has lent it the moniker "Needle Park."[xxv] [xxvi] But since its restoration, it has been called "the quintessential urban park" and a "Manhattan landmark"[xxvii] and "the most striking symbol of [NYC's] turnaround."[xxviii] But both in good and bad times, Bryant Park is considered to be Midtown Manhattan's only public square.[xxix]

[xvii]   Marilyn S. Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

[xviii]   George L. Kelling, "Why Did People Stop Committing Crimes? An Essay about Criminology and Ideology," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28 (2000): 572

[xix]   Eli B. Silverman and Jo-Ann Della-Giustina, "Urban Policing and the Fear of Crime," *Urban Studies,* 38 (5-6) 2001: 954

[xx]   The New York Times, among other newspapers and magazines, published several articles providing extensive coverage of these cases. The Louima case was covered in 1997 and the Diallo case in 1999.

[xxi]   Kit R. Roane, "Elite Force Quells Crime, But at a Cost, Critics Say," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1999, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition

[xxii]   George L. Kelling, "Why Did People Stop Committing Crimes? An Essay about Criminology and Ideology," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* **28** (2000): 572

[xxiii]   The New York Times, January 23, 1928, pg.20

[xxiv]   Paul Goldberger, "A Simpler Way to Improve Bryant Park," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1987, Section 2, Architecture View, Arts and Leisure Desk, Late City Final Edition.

[xxv]   Mitchell Owens, "Urban Arcadia," *The New York Times*, October 15, 1995, Home Design

[xxvi]   Tom Mitchell, "Inner cities go green, reduce crime," *Nation's Cities Weekly*, February 19, 1996

[xxvii]   Paul Goldberger, "Bryant Park, An Out-of-Town Experience," *The New York Times*, May 3, 1992, Section 2, Architecture View, Arts and Leisure Desk, Late Edition – Final

[xxviii]   Julia Vitullo-Martin, "The private sector shows how to run a city," *Wall Street Journal,* May 20, 1998, Eastern Edition

[xxix]   Paul Goldberger, "The 'New' Bryant Park: A Plan of Pros and Cons," *The New York Times,* December 1, 1983, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late City Final Edition

Bryant Park is bounded by the back of the New York Public Library and three streets, two of which are heavily trafficked.[xxx] The area where Bryant Park is located was designated as public property in the 17th century and has been used as a public park since 1846.[xxxi] Known as Reservoir Square, it was the site of NYC's first World Fair in 1853-54, an event that set off the city's first tourism boom; over one million people visited the exhibition. The park declined with the construction of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway in 1878, but it resumed its park character in 1884 when it was renamed Bryant Park.[xxxii]

In the 1930s, the park was used as a construction staging area during the excavations for the Sixth Avenue subway.[xxxiii] The Great Depression only made matters worse, until Robert Moses, commissioner of the City Parks Department, decided to redesign the park. Bryant Park was reopened on August 28, 1934,[xxxiv] but the next period of decline was already looming. The park was raised above street level and the redesign included high granite walls built around its perimeter to isolate it from the "vices of Times Square."[xxxv] The result was indeed an isolated area, which made it perfect for illicit activities.

The problems stemming from the formal Beaux-Arts design chosen for the park were aggravated in the 1960s by booming drug usage. By the 1970s, the park was considered "one of the drug capitals of the world."[xxxvi] Despite this dire situation and numerous attempts to close down the park, Bryant Park was designated an NYC landmark in 1974.[xxxvii] There have been accounts of the park offering a pleasant retreat from the commotion of Midtown Manhattan, albeit being rundown and dangerous. While drug deals were taking place on the edge of the park, the central lawn still offered a safe haven, particularly during heavy use periods.[xxxviii] Nonetheless, two surveys, one in 1974 and another in 1980 showed declining attendance and a low percentage of women among park users, which is an indicator of the lack of perceived security.[xxxix],[xl] In the early 1980s, 150 robberies and ten rapes a year were reported, in addition to a murder every other year.[xli],[xlii] The park had reached a low point and something had to be done.

[xxx] Mark Francis, "A Case Study Method for Landscape Architects," *Landscape Journal* **20**(1) (2001): 22.

[xxxi] The New York Times, "Bryant Park," January 22, 1934, pg.14

[xxxii] The New York Times, "Bryant Park Holds Flavor of Old City," May 1, 1932, pg.N3

[xxxiii] The New York Times, "Plan Suggested for Beautification of Bryant Park," January 21, 1934, pg.RE1

[xxxiv] The New York Times, "New Bryant Park to Open on Aug.28," August 14, 1934, pg.15

[xxxv] Peter Olasky, "Crime Impact Statements," *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems,* **37** (2004): 340, note 64.

[xxxvi] William J. Bratton, "New Strategies for Combating Crime in New York City," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* **23** (1996): 789

[xxxvii] J. William Thompson, *The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park*, (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

[xxxviii] Mark Francis, "A Case Study Method for Landscape Architects," *Landscape Journal* **20**(1) (2001): 25

[xxxix] J. William Thompson, *The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park,* (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

[xl] Project for Public Spaces, http://www.pps.org/ (accessed September 3, 2006)

[xli] Tom Mitchell, "Inner cities go green, reduce crime," *Nation's Cities Weekly*, February 19, 1996

Design Issues

Design features were blamed for Bryant Park's problems: the park stood three and a half feet above the street level, connected to adjoining sidewalks by steps at narrow, constricted entrances; tall and unkempt hedges and a wrought iron fence further blocked the view from the sidewalks; and the large quantity of hedges made if difficult for people to see across the park, which made them feel uncomfortable.[xliii] The restoration project lowered Moses's walls, tall hedges were pruned and secluded spaces eliminated. The result was a dramatic decline in crime. [xliv],[xlv]

One of the catalysts of the park's revival was the renovation of the New York Public Library, abutting the park, initiated in 1979. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, headquartered in the neighborhood, commissioned urban public space expert William H. Whyte to do an analysis of the library's "backyard." Whyte considered the perception of Bryant Park as an enclosure cut off from the city to be a problem. He said the original park had been designed according to a plan that "was fearful of the street."[xlvi] His recommendations included: removal of the iron fences and shrubbery, improvement of visual access up the steps and introduction of ramps for the handicapped, opening up of balustrades and access to the terrace for easier circulation, and rehabilitation of restroom structures.[xlvii],[xlviii] One of his specific suggestions was to have loose seating as well as fixed benches, which resulted in the inclusion of 1,000 movable chairs of the style seen in French parks.[xlix] More recently, as many as 2,200 dark green slatted folding chairs have been reported and it is said only one or two are stolen each month.[l] The interventions were simple, but would prove very effective.

Implementation

In 1980, a master plan to restore Bryant Park was proposed and the BPRC was formed to coordinate implementation efforts. [li],[lii] Under an agreement proposed in 1983, the revitalization of the park would include extensive architectural and landscape changes. Construction began in 1982 and took ten years. The landscaping project included installation of new lighting,

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xlii   Julia Vitullo-Martin, "The private sector shows how to run a city," *Wall Street Journal,* May 20, 1998, Eastern Edition

xliii   Project for Public Spaces, http://www.pps.org/ (accessed September 3, 2006)

xliv   Mitchell Owens, "Urban Arcadia," *The New York Times*, October 15, 1995, Home Design

xlv   Peter Olasky, "Crime Impact Statements," *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems,* 37 (2004): 340, note 64.

xlvi   Bruce Weber, "After Years Under Wraps, A Midtown Park Is Back," *The New York Times*, April 22, 1992, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition – Final

xlvii   J. William Thompson, *The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park,* (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

xlviii   Mark Francis, "A Case Study Method for Landscape Architects," *Landscape Journal* **20**(1) (2001): 24

xlix   Paul Goldberger, "Bryant Park, An Out-of-Town Experience," *The New York Times*, May 3, 1992, Section 2, Architecture View, Arts and Leisure Desk, Late Edition – Final

l   Julia Vitullo-Martin, "The private sector shows how to run a city," *Wall Street Journal,* May 20, 1998, Eastern Edition

li   Urban Land Institute, http://www.uli.org/ (accessed September 1, 2006)

lii   Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, http://www.bryantpark.org/ (accessed September 4, 2006)

removal of large hedges that served to screen petty criminals, creation of gravel paths to encourage people to walk through the area and renovation of restrooms.[liii] Other projects included new entrances, restoration of monuments, and the construction of kiosks and a large restaurant. [liv],[lv] The large restaurant was considered too dominant by the public, so plans were scaled-down resulting in two small restaurants. [lvi],[lvii],[lviii]

The project was financed by a combination of private and public funds and the Parks Department maintained veto power over the BPRC's plans.[lix] In the first two and a half years, police reported a sharp decrease in crime.[lx] The park was closed in 1988, not for reasons of lack of security, but so that the library stacks, concealed under the central lawn today, could be built.[lxi] This "virtually invisible use" was not envisioned by the original design of the park; the two underground levels of stacks house 3.2 million volumes of the New York Public Library's holdings and are connected to the library building by a sixty-two foot long tunnel. [lxii]

Bryant Park's Rebirth

Bryant Park reopened in April 1992, after five years of renovation, with a budget six times the level under prior city management. The redesign and restoration of the park, dubbed "a small miracle"[lxiii] and "an experiment in management and politics as much as in design,"[lxiv] cost $8.9 million[lxv] six million of which went into physical changes.[lxvi] Once the restoration was

[liii]   Deirdre Carmody, "Vast Rebuilding of Bryant Park Planned," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1983, Section A, Metropolitan Desk, Late City Final Edition

[liv]   Deirdre Carmody, "Proposal for Restaurant in Bryant Park Disputed," *The New York Times,* May 16, 1983, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late City Final Edition

[lv]   Paul Goldberger, "Bryant Park, An Out-of-Town Experience," *The New York Times,* May 3, 1992, Section 2, Architecture View, Arts and Leisure Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lvi]   Bruce Weber, "Town Square of Midtown," *The New York Times,* August 25, 1995, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lvii]   Mark Francis, "A Case Study Method for Landscape Architects," *Landscape Journal* **20**(1) (2001): 24

[lviii]   Paul Goldberger, "A Simpler Way to Improve Bryant Park," *The New York Times,* October 4, 1987, Section 2, Architecture View, Arts and Leisure Desk, Late City Final Edition

[lix]   Deirdre Carmody, "Proposal for Restaurant in Bryant Park Disputed," *The New York Times,* May 16, 1983, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late City Final Edition

[lx]   Deirdre Carmody, "Accord Reached on Restoration of Bryant Park," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1983, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late City Final Edition

[lxi]   Bruce Weber, "After Years Under Wraps, A Midtown Park Is Back," *The New York Times,* April 22, 1992, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lxii]   J. William Thompson, *The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park*, (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

[lxiii]   Bruce Weber, "After Years Under Wraps, A Midtown Park Is Back," *The New York Times*, April 22, 1992, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lxiv]   Paul Goldberger, "Bryant Park, An Out-of-Town Experience," *The New York Times*, May 3, 1992, Section 2, Architecture View, Arts and Leisure Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lxv]   Claudia H. Deutsch, "Commercial Property: Bryant Park; Once Anathema, Now a Midtown Marketing Tool," *The New York Times*, June 6, 1993, Section 10, Real Estate Desk, Late Edition – Final.

[lxvi]   Mark Francis, "A Case Study Method for Landscape Architects," *Landscape Journal* **20**(1) (2001): 24

concluded, BPRC's maintenance budget was $1.7 million; these funds came from the City Parks Department, private donors, sponsorships, concession and event revenues, and businesses in the neighborhood.[lxvii] The park has received numerous design awards.[lxviii] Within seven years, crime had been reduced by 92 percent and the number of annual visitors had doubled. [lxix] Today, over 5,000 people gather in the park during lunch hour and about 20,000 visit the park every day.

Figure 3: Bryant Park

© *Joseli Macedo*

Bryant Park's success has spread to the rest of the neighborhood as well. While in the 1980s property values of the surrounding neighborhood were held down,[lxx] in the two years after its renovation, rental activity around the park increased by 60 percent.[lxxi] In 1990, there were vacant buildings surrounding the park; by 1992 rent rates were going up with every contract

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[lxvii]   Bruce Weber, "Town Square of Midtown," *The New York Times,* August 25, 1995, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lxviii] Urban Land Institute, http://www.uli.org/ (accessed September 18, 2006)

[lxix]   J. William Thompson, *The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park*, (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

[lxx]   Julia Vitullo-Martin, "The private sector shows how to run a city," *Wall Street Journal,* May 20, 1998, Eastern Edition

[lxxi]   Project for Public Spaces, http://www.pps.org/ (accessed September 3, 2006)

that was drawn up.[lxxii] The park that was once considered to be a deterrent to renters had become a marketing tool, affecting the real estate market in a very short period of time.[lxxiii] This increase in real estate values encouraged owners to invest in their properties.

Perceived Safety

The park's rebirth is the result of a combination of various factors, some of them stemming from the broken windows hypothesis.[lxxiv] In addition to the elements introduced by the redesign of the park, new amenities were installed at the prime spots where the drug dealers had once positioned themselves. These physical improvements spawned more public activity, crowding out the drug users as well as other "undesirables," as William H. Whyte generically called homeless persons and drug pushers. Notwithstanding, a study found that increased maintenance and policing were credited with the success of the park to a greater extent than the physical design.[lxxv]

Uniformed security guards and maintenance personnel provide upkeep; their presence discourages crime and vandalism by making it clear the park is important and cared-for. The increased access and visibility of the park, improved lighting, and signage that indicates park rules and regulations, have all contributed to making the park safer. Initially, the park defied attempts to make it a place where people could feel safe. Despite early efforts, there was an average of 60 arrests a month for marijuana offences and other quality of life crimes, and several arrests for felonious assault in 1983. [lxxvi] By the late 1990s, Bryant Park was virtually crime-free and attracted thousands of people who came to the park to sunbathe, picnic, or attend events; neighborhood businesses were flourishing and property values were increasing. [lxxvii,lxxviii] The diversity of people frequenting the park was also noticeable: young executives, elderly people, women and children and even a few homeless people.[lxxix]

Nowadays, most Bryant Park complaints are related to management and the fact that the park is being operated like a business.[lxxx] The mix of funding that was there when the park reopened has changed and today BPRC has to charge fees to keep up with the expenses. Bryant Park is

[lxxii] Claudia H. Deutsch, "Commercial Property: Bryant Park; Once Anathema, Now a Midtown Marketing Tool," *The New York Times*, June 6, 1993, Section 10, Real Estate Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lxxiii] J. William Thompson, *The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park,* (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

[lxxiv] Tom Mitchell, "Inner cities go green, reduce crime," *Nation's Cities Weekly*, February 19, 1996

[lxxv] Mark Francis, "A Case Study Method for Landscape Architects," *Landscape Journal* **20**(1) (2001): 25

[lxxvi] Deirdre Carmody, "Vast Rebuilding of Bryant Park Planned," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1983, Section A, Metropolitan Desk, Late City Final Edition

[lxxvii] Bruce Weber, "Town Square of Midtown," *The New York Times*, August 25, 1995, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition – Final

[lxxviii] Julia Vitullo-Martin, "The private sector shows how to run a city," *Wall Street Journal*, May 20, 1998, Eastern Edition

[lxxix] J. William Thompson, The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park, (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

[lxxx] Timothy Williams, "In Bryant Park's Rebirth, Some Chafe at Growing Corporate Presence," The New York Times, December 5, 2005, Section B, Metropolitan Desk, Late Edition – Final

the only park in the city that receives no public financing. In 1993, BPRC had no revenues from user fees; in 2004 those amounted to $1.7 million, 40 percent of the total revenue in that year. Although most events are free and open to the public, parts of the park are closed at times to accommodate preparations related to events. Some people also complain about the disturbance caused by marketing imposed on park users by event and amenity sponsors.

Summary and Conclusions

This case describes crime reduction and crime prevention initiatives in the context of urban revitalization in NYC. It focuses on Midtown Manhattan and details a restoration project in the only public square in the area, Bryant Park. NYC, following a national trend, has had declining crime rates for 30 years. Midtown Manhattan, once the most popular entertainment district in the city, started a period of decline in the late 1960s that led to neglect, abandonment and criminalization. Successive city administrations implemented policies to improve law enforcement with good results, but certain places within the urban area needed to address other aspects as well. In the 1980s, private non-profit groups decided to get involved and a period of redevelopment, restoration and revitalization was initiated. Bryant Park was one of the catalysts for this process.

Certain areas within the park had been appropriated by drug dealers and users. Most tourists, business people working in the area, and patrons of the adjacent library, particularly women, avoided the park. The original design detached the park from its surroundings with the intention of providing a place of relaxation and respite from the urban chaos; however, this isolation turned it into the perfect hiding place for derelicts and criminals. Once the BPRC took over the day-to-day management and maintenance of the park, including security services, some citizens were concerned about the loss of control of public space. Despite these concerns, public-private partnerships proved effective in not only restoring public areas and business districts, but also maintaining security and enforcing order and thus, working in the public interest to increase security for everyone.

What Can Be Learned from the Bryant Park Case in New York City

The restoration of Bryant Park took over ten years to implement and complete, but the results were worthwhile. Not only did the New York Public Library gain additional space for their stacks, which are located underneath the park's central lawn, but NYC gained a safe, welcoming public space. Even though Bryant Park has been an important public place in the city for more than 150 years, its periods of decline have prevented citizens from enjoying it and have allowed part of the public realm to become a breeding ground for criminal activities. Today, the park is used for several events in addition to being a desirable place where people spend time and find respite and recreation; it has also become self-sufficient being the only park in the city that does not receive any public funding. The existence of public spaces such as the restored Bryant Park confirms that even large and dense urban places such as NYC can offer their citizens the opportunity to enjoy the public realm. These opportunities are part of what makes cities sustainable in the long-term.

Reclaiming the Public Realm

There is no doubt that Bryant Park is indeed a success story. Reclaiming a public space that had been hijacked by drug pushers and users and making it not only accessible, but also desirable to thousands of people on a daily basis is a considerable achievement. The decline in crime afforded by the restoration of Bryant Park and other areas in close proximity to it is undeniable. According to NYPD data, violent crime in the Midtown South Precinct area, where both Bryant Park and Times Square are located, declined 81 percent between 1990 and 2005.[lxxxi] Evidence suggests that city administrators would not have been able to accomplish this feat on their own. By most accounts, the participation of private businesses and citizens made it all possible.

In terms of physical and design-induced changes, Bryant Park serves as a model. Inspired by William H. Whyte's philosophy of urban space and his understanding of how social behavior is influenced by it, the park's design proves that simple elements can be used to great effect. If "[s]ocial justice demands spatial justice,"[lxxxii] then the restoration of Bryant Park could serve as an inspiration. The spatial changes in the park have made it welcoming to any citizen or visitor passing by. Society demands civility, so behavior is the only thing that is controlled in the park. The homeless continue to be welcome, as long as they abide by park regulations and behave in a manner that is acceptable to the majority of the people benefiting from the public space.[lxxxiii]

Enduring Lessons

A combination of physical changes and increased law enforcement can be credited with Bryant Park's rebirth. An important lesson to be learned is that a better understanding of all the issues that factor into making not only public space but entire cities safe, comfortable and desirable is needed. When people are willing to be creative, tolerant, and innovative, institutional and economic barriers can be surpassed.

The Bryant Park experience also shows that sustained efforts are necessary. Restoration projects that only address one aspect of the myriad of problems usually comprising degraded areas do not yield the same benefits. The physical environment is an important component of any redevelopment project, but urban design and landscape architecture can only create the enabling environment for a successful public space. Other initiatives that ensure economic vitality, absence of crime, continued sources of revenue, and close attention to maintenance and management are indispensable. Only by combining design ingenuity with other continuous efforts can a public space be created and sustained.

[lxxxi] New York Police Department Crime statistics, CompStat, vol.13, n.32, http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/pct/cspdf.html (accessed September 10, 2006)

[lxxxii] Jeff Ferrell. "Remapping the City: Public Identity, Cultural Space, and Social Justice," *Contemporary Justice Review* 4(2) (2001): 177

[lxxxiii] J. William Thompson, *The Rebirth of New York City's Bryant Park*, (Washington D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 1997)

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