

Fort Washington & Upper Riverside Parks PlaNYC Survey Results



A \$40 Million Investment

Thanks to Mayor Bloomberg’s PlaNYC, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) is developing plans for a major investment in Fort Washington and upper Riverside Parks, a strip of greenery providing dramatic vistas, ballfields and meadows along the Hudson River from 145th Street to Dyckman Street. The \$40 million committed to this project will create destination parks for neighborhood residents and other New Yorkers. Potential improvements include a network of bike and pedestrian paths, active and passive recreation areas, new playgrounds and accessible bathrooms.

Surveying Methodology

Partnerships for Parks, a joint program of City Parks Foundation and DPR, led the development of the Fort Washington/upper Riverside survey, working with DPR and design consultants. Surveys were designed to determine current and projected use patterns and solicit ideas for park improvements. A total of 536 surveys were collected in English and Spanish during July and August 2007. 374 were collected in a variety of locations in the park on weekdays and weekends at a range of times; 68 were collected via mail; 68 through the DPR website; and 26 at neighborhood community events.ⁱ

Survey Respondents

32% of survey respondents live in Manhattan neighborhoods near Fort Washington and upper Riverside parks, 15% live in other Manhattan neighborhoods, 5% live in the Bronx, 2% in Brooklyn, 1% in Queens, 3% live outside New York City, and 42% did not identify their place of residence.ⁱⁱ

Travel to the Park

- 20% of all respondents use more than one mode of transportation (biking and walking are most popular).
- Respondents from other parts of Manhattan are twice as likely to bike to the parks than those from neighborhoods near the parks.

How do you travel to the park?	
Walk	56%
Bike	43%
Car	13%
Public Transportation	7%
<i>Numbers do not add up to 100% because multiple selections were allowed.</i>	

New Facilities and Programs

Survey respondents were asked to rank possible facilities and programs in order of importance to them. Highest priority responses are shown here. “Choice” categories reflect statistically significant differences among answers.

What new facilities do you want in the park?	
<i>First Choice</i>	Bike Paths
<i>Second Choice</i>	Restrooms Natural Areas
<i>Third Choice</i>	Connection to Ft. Tryon Park Water fountains Continuous greenway
<i>Fourth Choice</i>	Lighting Water access/beach Pedestrian-only paths
<i>Fifth Choice</i>	Signs and maps Quiet seating areas

What kind of programs do you want in the park?	
<i>First Choice</i>	Cultural programs
<i>Second Choice</i>	Children’s programs Water-based programs
<i>Third Choice</i>	Environmental education Fitness programs
<i>Fourth Choice</i>	Teen programs Senior programs

Open-ended responses

300 of the 536 people surveyed responded to the open-ended questions on the surveys. The following table shows the number of times each issue was mentioned. Because multiple answers were allowed, 706 comments appear.

Issues Brought Up in Open-Ended Responses	
Improvements to existing park facilities	145
Problems with specific locations in the parks	124
Security and lighting concerns	111
Problems with transportation, access, and trail systems	91
Environmental conservation and education	77
Restoration and historic preservation	59
Access to water (passive and recreational use)	44
Thank you/I love this park!	42
Bathroom improvements	27
More food, concessions, and cultural events	15
Fewer park facilities (preserve natural areas)	11
Access for strollers, the elderly, and disabled	9
Concern about PlaNYC's impact on local users	9
Total	706

"I feel insecure at entrances and pathways."

"There should be more activities that groups of people can enjoy together."

"I do not want more playgrounds and soccer fields. I like the quietness and pastoral quality that the park embodies."

"Cyclists make the path unsafe for children."

"Pedestrians get in the way of bikers on the bike path."

Survey respondents were asked to suggest special places in the parks that should be preserved or enhanced.

Special Places to Preserve or Enhance	
Little Red Lighthouse	46
Waterfront access, beach	34
Tennis courts	17
Green spaces, natural areas, gardens	17
George Washington Bridge and Dyckman areas	16
Wild berries and native species	14

"The waterfront access area around the Little Red Lighthouse is particularly special and the annual festival is absolutely terrific!"

"I love how easily one can get to water, that it is not fenced off."

Survey respondents were asked to suggest parks similar to Fort Washington and upper Riverside parks with interesting or beautiful elements that might serve as inspiration for the park designers.

Parks with Interesting/Beautiful Elements to Investigate	
Central Park	22
Riverside Park (esp. lower Riverside and Hippo Playgd.)	15
Fort Tryon Park	13
Battery Park	8
Riverbank State Park	4
Inwood Hill Park	4

"With the lighthouse, the gorgeous views, the rocks next to the river, the sense of a Shangrila., this is a unique place. I can't think of someplace comparable."

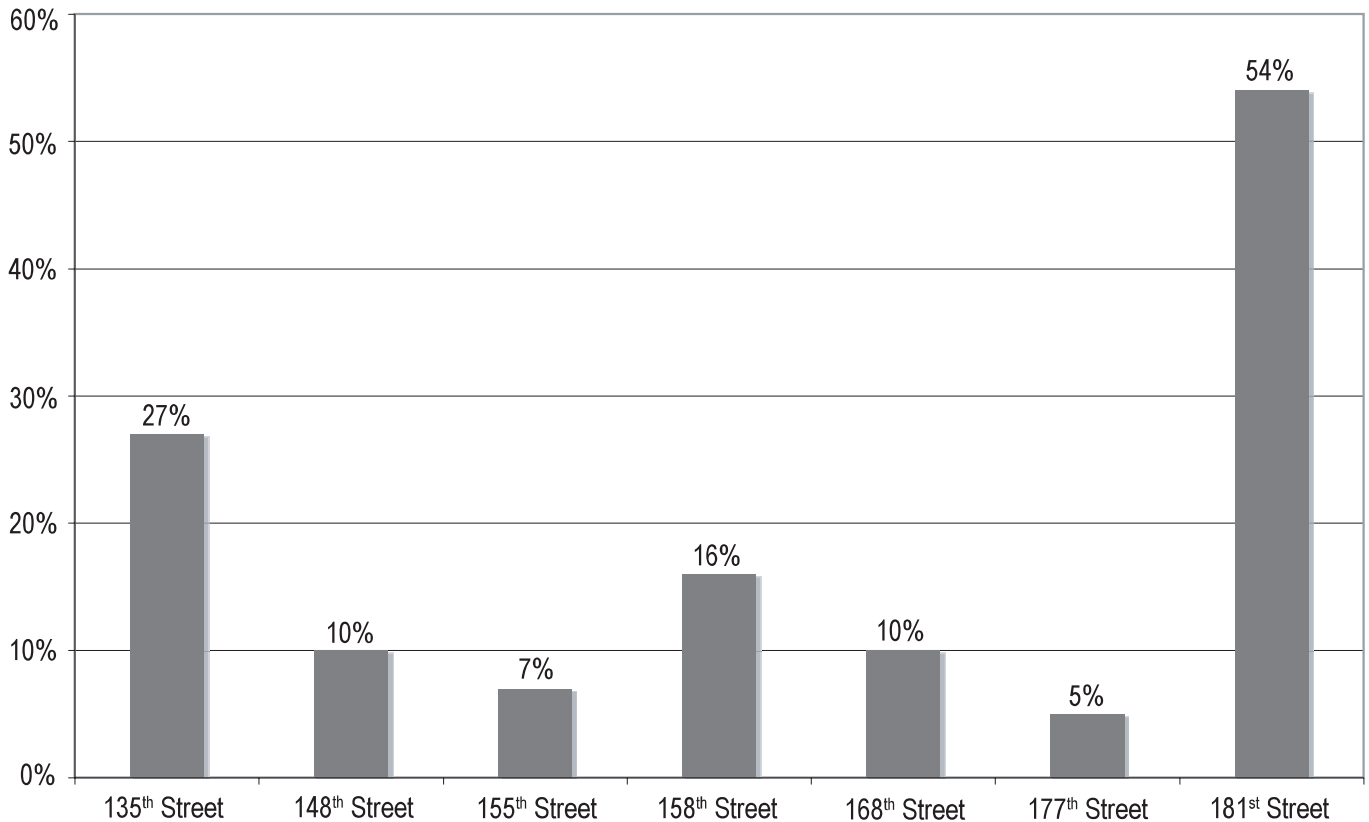
See accompanying graphs for information regarding:

- *Priorities for park improvements*
- *Use of existing park entrances, concerns about existing park entrances, and suggested locations for new entrances*
- *Use of parks by time of day and time of week*

ⁱ Because the survey did not use a random selection of the population, a margin of error cannot be computed for the data. Because a significant number of respondents answered with "x"s instead of numbers for questions seven through ten, these responses have been reclassified as fourth choice for analysis purposes. Fourth choice was the average response for these questions and therefore sufficiently represents the intent of the survey respondents.

ⁱⁱ Neighborhoods near Fort Washington & upper Riverside parks were defined as zip codes 10027, 030, 031, 032, 033, 039 & 040.

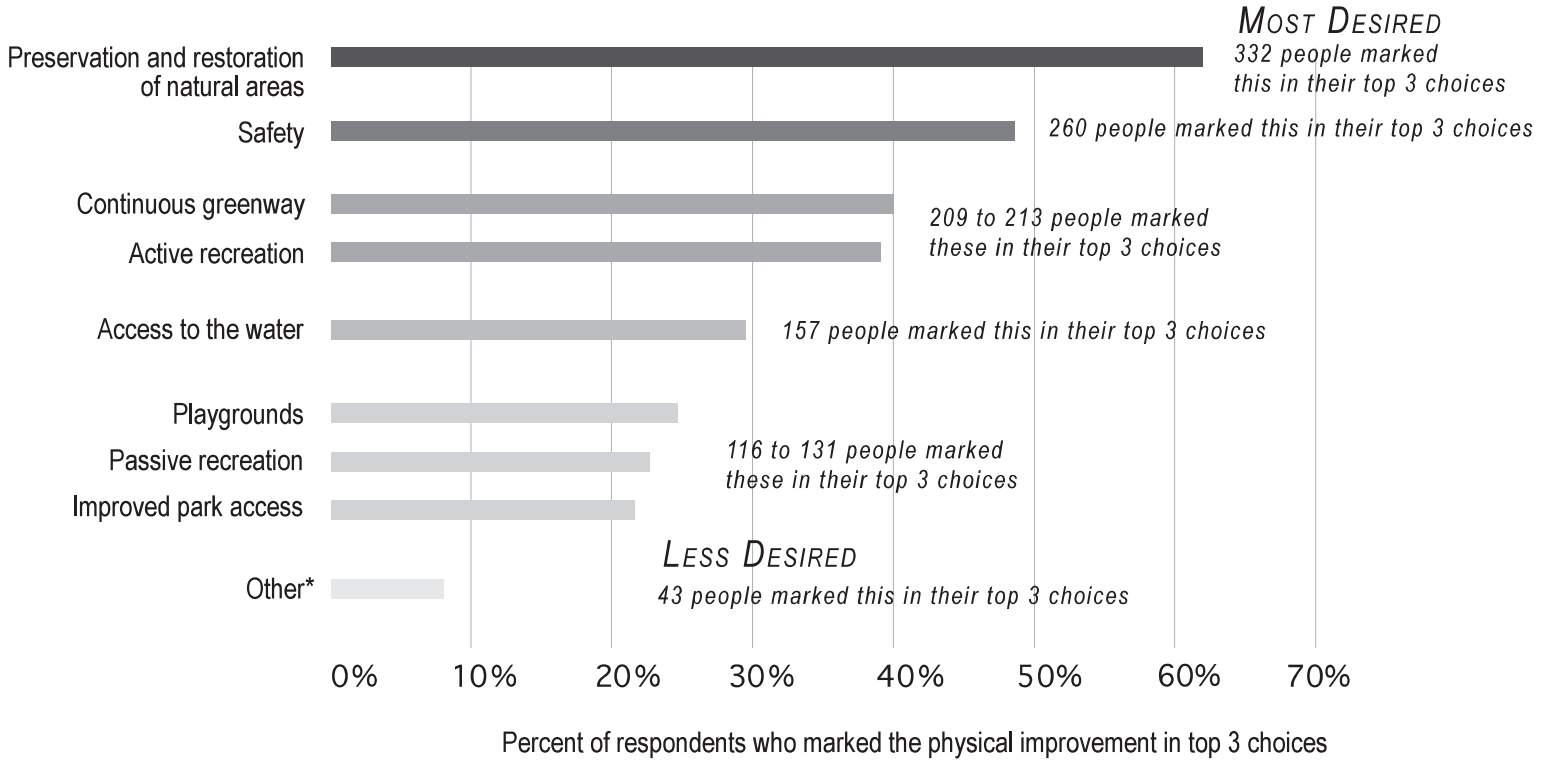
Fort Washington/Upper Riverside Park Entrance Usage



Concerns about entrances include:

- Steepness of 181st Street entrance.
- Difficulty of finding exits once inside the park.
- Need for better bike/wheelchair/stroller accessibility in the middle and southern ends of the park and improved safety and cleanliness of the existing entrances in the middle of the park.
- **The most popular locations suggested for new entrances were Dyckman Street, above 181st Street, 165th Street, and 145th Street.**

Fort Washington/Upper Riverside Park Physical Improvements



*Most popular suggestions for "other," in descending popularity: restrooms, cleanliness, sports fields (especially soccer), walking paths separate from bike paths for pedestrian safety, preservation of peace and quiet, food vendors, improved/expanded bike paths, accessibility for the disabled, and dog runs.

Fort Washington/Upper Riverside Park Usage by Time of Day

