

# The Epoch Times

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## **Brooklyn Bridge Park Designed to Draw Locals and Visitors to a Grand View**



NEW YORK—Green space and waterfront views are two highly coveted amenities in the city. Capitalizing on its desirable waterfront location, Brooklyn Bridge Park has become a world-class attraction, drawing tourists and locals alike. The park is also a magnet for new residents and economic development.

Brooklyn Bridge Park enjoys 1.3 miles of waterfront on Brooklyn’s west side adjacent to the Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO neighborhoods. The park recently won an award for its planning and design. The American Planning Association will award the park its 2014 National Planning Excellence Award for Urban Design at its annual meeting in April.

During snowy winter mornings, joggers make full use of the park. “There’s a huge running community [here],” said Alison O’Donnell, a student at Kings College and regular jogger in the park.

On days when the weather is nice, the park can be quite crowded in the early morning. Even when the thermometer drops to 10 degrees Fahrenheit, joggers pass through the park’s many trails every minute. A block away, hordes of young children are being walked to school by their parents.

On warmer days, O’Donnell said, the park is filled with families, picnickers, wedding parties posing for photographs, and couples watching the sunset.

Currently, 38 acres have been developed from Atlantic Avenue to Jay Street just north of the Manhattan Bridge.

The park was designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, the same firm that landscaped the Toll Brothers' Pierhouse development at the park.

A few years back, the waterfront was not only inaccessible but considered a "wasteland, a dumping ground," said park CEO Regina Myer.

Now the park attracts a good 60,000 visitors on a nice weekend and up to 100,000 on summer weekends when events are in full swing. About a third are nearby residents, a third are New Yorkers, and another third are tourists, Myer said.

The design is different from other earlier waterfront parks, Myer added. Rather than a formal edge bridging off the water, the landscape architects created an organic edging.

"You can actually touch the water in a lot of parts of the shoreline," Myer said.

From the very beginning, an emphasis on the views was deemed crucial.

"Those views become a part of the park and a part of the park experience," Myer said. "So when people come down to the water's edge they feel like they're virtually touching the Statue of Liberty."

Sweeping views of the East River, the Lower Manhattan skyline, and Brooklyn Bridge are big reasons the park is able to fund its maintenance and operations.

### **Funded by Housing**

Brooklyn Bridge Park is a public-private partnership where residential developments will contribute \$16 million to the park's budget annually. This covers all park maintenance fees—a condition the city and state required to commit \$315 million for construction.

In terms of construction, the park still needs \$27.5 million.

The Pierhouse condos and a hotel developed by Starwood Capital Group at the end of Pier 1 are expected to generate \$3.2 million annually. One Brooklyn Bridge Park, a condo-conversion project nearby, already generates \$2 million annually.

"It's become a world-class attraction," said Doug Bowen, CORE real estate agent specializing in Brooklyn properties and representing One Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Bowen said the park has definitely added value to the adjacent neighborhoods and is an attraction for home buyers to choose DUMBO and Brooklyn Heights.

Pierhouse, which recently launched its sales gallery, is only the first of the new developments in the park, Bowen added, and in regard to rising property values, "people will still be talking about it ten years from now."

By creating a place where people want to be, it's helped nearby neighborhoods grow the local economy. "Brooklyn Bridge Park is the best thing to happen to DUMBO since cobblestone," said Alexandria Sica, executive director of the DUMBO Business Improvement District, or DUMBO BID. DUMBO BID represents property owners, merchants, businesses, and cultural organizations, according to its website.

The award-winning design and views of the park has inspired the creative businesses, Sica said. The park's become a major draw for visitors as well, bringing tourist dollars to the local economy.

"It's also been a huge draw for families, helping create a community of young Brooklynites who will grow up on the shore of the East River," Sica said.