

City Hall needs to look more closely at these parks and the individual repairs. When I dealt with capital budgets for that agency as counsel and chief of staff to a council member, I pointedly refused to fund fencing for playground and ballfield perimeters. Instead, I focused on what really mattered: the playground fields and the equipment. Most times the fencing remained adequate even if useful life standards permitted a replacement. City Hall and the Parks Commissioner ought to order Parks staffers to review and re-envision projects; the saving found just may enable the City to fund these 24 projects. Furthermore, City Hall needs to evaluate the program that opens school ballfields to community use to show how much access communities have gained to date. An audit, Mr. Comptroller-elect?
-Corey Bearak, President, Queens Civic Congress

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/17/nyregion/17schoolyards.html?_r=2&ref=nyregion

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24 Sites Cut From City Plan for 290 Parks

By [MIREYA NAVARRO](#)

From Borough Park in Brooklyn to Morris Heights in the Bronx, many New York City residents will still have to walk more than 10 minutes to reach a playground or park.

Shrinking funds have led the city to scrap plans to refurbish 24 of the 290 schoolyards slated for public use in Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#)'s environmental agenda, the city's [Independent Budget Office](#) said Wednesday on its [Web site](#). Nine of the schoolyards cut are in Queens, with eight in Brooklyn and seven in the Bronx.

The cuts are expected to save \$25 million. "It's not a large cut to the program, but it's a rollback," said Doug Turetsky, the budget office's chief of staff. "It's an example of how fiscal difficulties are affecting neighborhoods."

[The environmental plan, called PlaNYC](#), was announced with great fanfare in 2007 and included [converting schoolyards into public places on weekends and after classes with the goal of ensuring that every New Yorker would live within a 10-minute walk of a playground or park.](#)

A spokesman for the mayor, Jason Post, said every capital program had been reduced because of tax-revenue loss during the recession. “We had to cut everything a little bit,” he said.

He said the eliminated sites “were more expensive to renovate or they were not viable to convert because of access issues or inadequate space.”

Most of the schoolyards need investments ranging from play equipment to pavement repairs and new fencing, but the budget for such improvements has dropped 26 percent since 2007, to about \$71 million. Ninety-six schoolyards have already opened under the program.

Some park advocates see the cuts as a major blow. The city lags well behind others in available parkland — offering 4.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents compared to a median of 6.8 acres among 13 densely populated areas, according to figures from the [Trust for Public Land](#).

“It’s a slap in the face of communities that desperately need open space,” said Geoffrey Croft, president of [NYC Park Advocates](#), a watchdog group.

The playground conversions expected to be completed by 2030 would offer additional play space to 360,000 children. But the budget office warned that “many of the schoolyards yet to be finished under the plan require the most work.”