

# Bryant Park

## Intimidation or Recreation?

by Project for Public Spaces, Inc.

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## our thanks

In the following pages, the development and execution of a concept for "restoring" New York City's Bryant Park are outlined. The PPS project team owes warm thanks to those persons who have devoted special attention and energy to this Park over a long period of time, particularly Dan Biederman, Executive Director, Bryant Park Restoration Corporation; the Parks Council, under the direction of Jeanette Bamford; William H. Whyte; Anita Nager and Wally Wentworth, authors of *Bryant Park: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Its Image and Use*, July, 1976; and members of the New York City Police Department, particularly Lt. Tom McNulty and Sgt. Ed Amato.

## the problem

# introduction

Bryant Park, with its superb location on New York's Avenue of the Americas behind the New York City Public Library (see Figure 1 for orientation map) is considered by most of its users to be a relaxing oasis, a sanctuary from the constant push and shove of midtown Manhattan. Still, there are thousands of people who walk along its edges daily and never enter, and others who work in offices overlooking the five acres of grass and trees and who fear to try to enjoy them. Current use and abuse of Bryant Park and the public spaces surrounding the Library have caused problems for New Yorkers and visitors alike.

In the case of people who avoid the park entirely, or use only sections of it with caution, an understandable human concern results from the presence of marijuana dealers and drifters, and from the fear of crime. The Park is indeed an active soft-drug marketplace supplying the surrounding office population. The high-visibility marketing techniques employed by many dealers make these concerns more acute. The infrequent cases of assault on ordinary passersby, however -- episodes which generate bold headlines and command prime radio and TV coverage -- perpetuate disproportionately the Park's "unsafe" image. Such images and concerns, part reality and part myth, require understanding and resolution if the current restoration program is to succeed.

Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS) was retained by the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation to develop design and activity recommendations that would address these objectives:

- To increase the Park's attractiveness to office workers, students, Library users, shoppers, residents and visitors

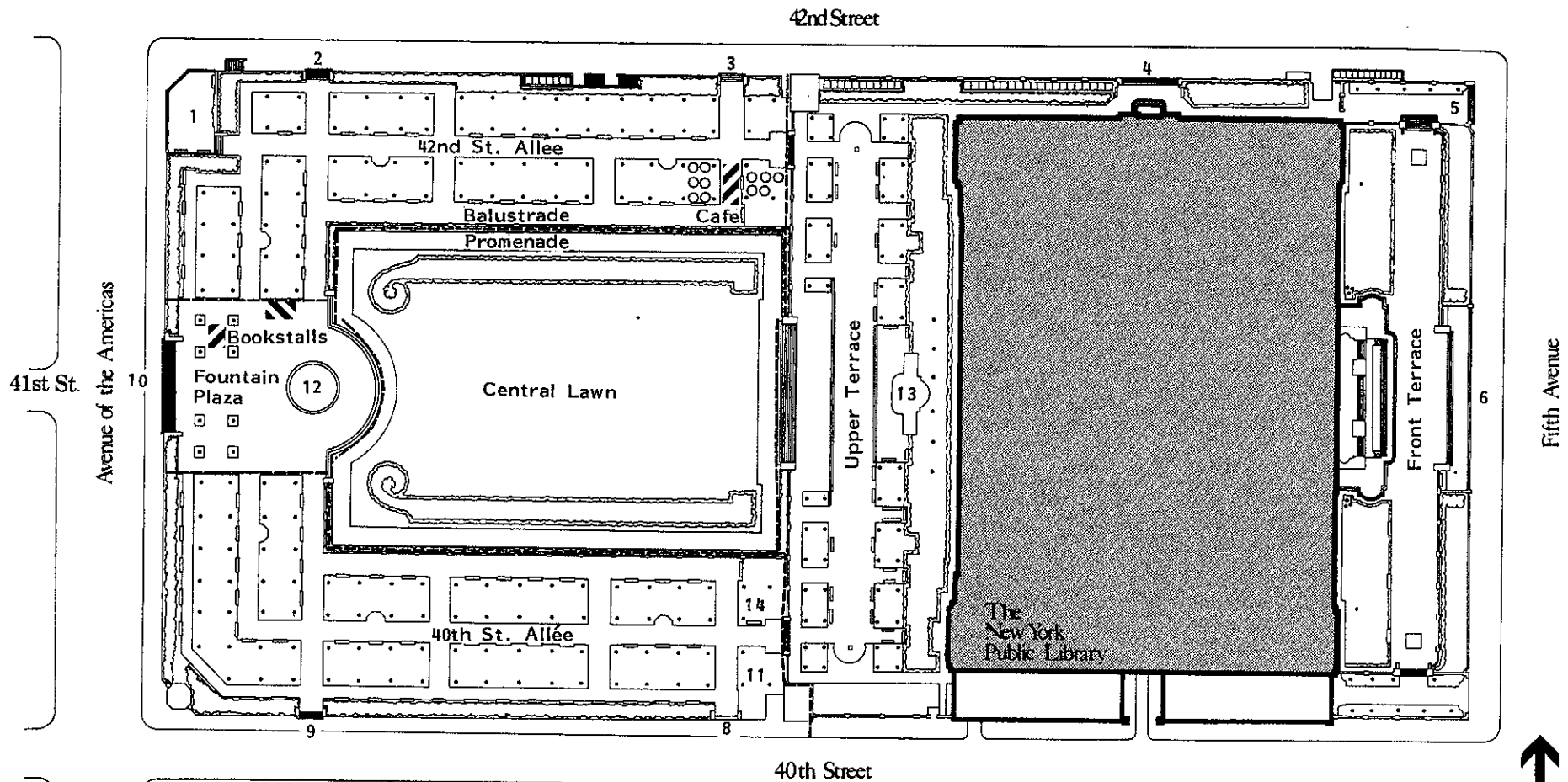


Figure 1 **Orientation Map**

ACCESS POINTS

1. Avenue of the Americas Plaza
2. 42nd Street Entrance
3. 42nd Street Mid-block
4. 42nd Street Library Entrance
5. 42nd Street/5th Avenue

OTHER

6. Front Steps
7. 40th Street/5th Avenue
8. 40th Street Mid-block
9. 40th Street Entrance
10. 41st Street Entrance
11. Maintenance Yard
12. Lowell Fountain
13. Bryant Statue
14. Picnic Area

- Tree
- Bench
- Hedge

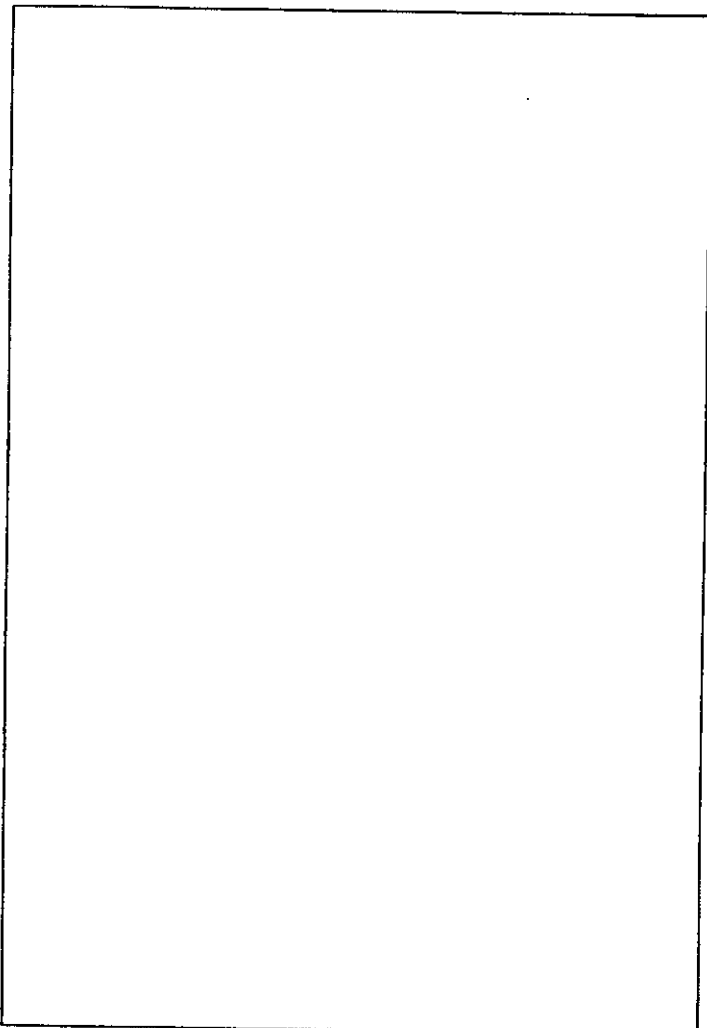
## background

- To increase the feeling of security and comfort for people using Bryant Park
- To maintain the Park's oasis-like atmosphere

Issues such as image, access and circulation, programming, landscape elements, support services, security, and the attitudes of park users and non-users have been reviewed and analyzed in order to formulate a restoration program that can accomplish these goals.

Bryant Park was originally designed to complement the architecture of the massive and handsome Public Library. Both the building and the Park benefited from a heritage of formal design that provided an integrated building linking of pathways, steps, terraces, shrubs, trees, and lawn. However, the Park's designers could not anticipate the dramatic changes in today's ideas about public spaces and the activities permissible in them, or how these changes would affect law-enforcement practices. Sun bathing in public parks, al fresco eating and even marijuana smoking, for instance, are now common practices.

As it was difficult for the re-designers of 1934 to anticipate the Park uses of 1980, so it is difficult for us to identify the goals and the constraints that influenced the selection of the present Bryant Park design over the other alternatives of 50 years ago. (One must also suppose that, then as now, the prevailing politics of the day had as much to do with the selection process as did the merits of the design.) In any case, to lean on history -- even selectively -- is not likely to help us to understand the present or to plan for the future in this instance.

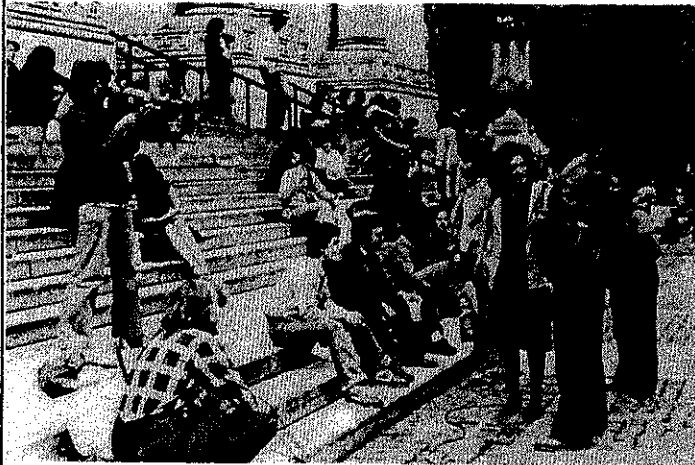


Not only the Park's original assumptions but also the original design have faded somewhat with time. Ornamental flower beds which were once great attractions have been lost. Shrubs have been allowed to become overgrown so that, rather than acting as a unifying element, they have become security hazards -- secluded areas for urination and illicit activity.

Midtown Manhattan has a resource of great potential if current efforts can combine Bryant Park's unique Beaux Arts landscape with the recreation needs of the present. The integrity of the formal setting of Bryant Park lies in the positioning of the central lawn as a foreground for the terrace behind the Library. A protective envelope for the Park as a sanctuary is provided by the allees which surround the lawn. The symmetry of the formal park design is a significant element in its Beaux Arts quality, but the rigidity of the design is not always compatible with the way people actually use the Park. In some cases, the elements which reinforce the formal design -- such as the walkway grid formed by the allees and the balustrade adjacent to the lawn -- lie at the heart of the Park's continuing social and security problems. For example, a visitor entering the Park sees a network of paths and supposes that he can move along them to his destination -- only to find that there is no entrance or exit where he had expected to find one.

However, one concept that was a guiding principle in 1934 has successfully carried over to 1980 -- the concept of the Park as sanctuary. The purpose -- recognized by most visitors during the PPS surveys--has become our guiding principle as well. The concept of sanctuary embodies the feelings of security, of comfort, of relaxation, of protection. While many New Yorkers do not see these attributes as apt descriptions of today's Bryant Park, our goal is to enhance each one through complementary design, program and management changes. To do this we must deal with today's uses, today's abuses.

## the approach



In tackling the "restoration" problem, PPS started with data collection and proceeded to analysis. Both stages provided a systematic review of the social design and operational components of the Park's use. Those aspects which worked in harmony and those which created discord were identified. The data-collection phase included videotaped interviews of park users and non-users as well as surveys made inside the Park to try to measure users' attitudes regarding its vitality. Also, we have had numerous interviews and consultations with those people and organizations interested in the operation of the Park, including the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, the Parks Council, the Municipal Arts Society, the Midtown South Police Precinct, and the New York City Parks Department.

Additional data collection identified the types of activities that take place in the Park — including marijuana dealing — and assessed the impact of demonstration projects and changes in police routine. As this information was being tabulated and the findings interpreted, the project team developed a sense of the Park and its possibilities as an integrated whole, which shaped the approach to restoration that is presented in this report. Detailed objectives for specific portions of the Park were translated into specific design and management recommendations. Throughout, we have tried to address management issues such as security, maintenance and activity programming together with design issues, so that both parts of the concept become locked together as one.

Our plan for the proposed restoration of Bryant Park is a concept framework, not a final design scheme. The detail in which the objectives are depicted seems necessary to provide a clear understanding of how the various components may be expected to interact. Once agreement has been reached on the objectives and the manner in which they are to be met, it will be necessary to initiate a design phase which will refine the concept for clarity and cost.



# historical perspective

"With proper soil, careful planting, sufficient maintenance and plenty of water, Bryant Park can, in fact, be made into a fine garden. The location is marred only by the presence of the El line on 6th Ave. But skill in planning and planting will remedy this defect, and will transform it from a barren dump into one of the city's most attractive breathing spots." N.Y. Times, Jan. 21, 1928

"It is even more in the public eye of New York than Central Park or any other park in our city. Let us make it attractive." N.Y. Times, Jan. 21, 1928

Bryant Park since its inception has had a history of "user misuse." Attempts to correct this and to mold the Park according to personal preferences or the vogue of the day have resulted in frequent physical and social restructurings that have rapidly become obsolete. The following brief history of the Park provides illustration.

By the end of the 19th century stately mansions were giving way to more modest housing and to businesses as mid-town changed to a more commercial and industrial area. In the early 1900s, Bryant Park underwent drastic physical and social changes as part of this process. In 1912, a path was constructed which cut across the circular center grass plot from near 40th Street to the gateway at 42nd Street at the rear of the Library. Nine years later, The New York Times reported "jobless men camping in the Park." Then, in 1922, the construction of the Queens borough subway extension closed a large section of the Park. On January 23, 1928 The New York Times reported: "Bryant Park has been for years a disgrace to the city. Even before it was ruined by the subway excavation it was in dilapidated condition. Poorly planned, it had been inadequately maintained. Misused by the public, it was unsightly. No other city in the world would have tolerated such a Park in the heart in one of the most important districts. Since the subway has been built, the Park has been more of an eyesore than ever."

The years between 1926 and 1928 saw plans for Bryant Park's restoration. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, more than 100 different plans for redesign of the Park were proposed. The three main types of design proposals, as summarized by The New York Times, were:

- 1) "A scheme of straight paths cross-cutting diagonally through the center of the Park, so rigid and severe in direction as to make them a sunny highway of pedestrian travels,

"... the conditions of the park which through neglect and misuse had become 'a mudhole, a place of desolation, the burying place of lost hopes, headquarters of the narcotics purveyors and communists.'" The Boulevard (Sept. 1934) — the official Journal of the Sixth Avenue Association

"At the present time the stranger within our gates passing along 6th Ave. between 40th and 42nd Streets would no doubt wonder how this spot came to be called a park." N.Y. Times, Jan. 21, 1934

"When it is considered how many thousands of persons pass the park daily, it has been a disgrace to the city and an eyesore which now may be turned into a thing of joy and beauty for those who pass by." N.Y. Times, Feb. 18, 1934

"To Moses & Mayor La Guardia the Park had become a 'symbol of municipal inefficiency.'" Robert Moses, 1934, prior to the renovation of 1934

at a sacrifice of restful beauty and interesting diversion so necessary to contrast with the hard monotony of city streets."

2) "The New York Society of Landscape Architects protested against the diagonal cutting across the center of the park and advocated a panel treatment, an elongated central open space which might be a lawn, a basin of water or a paved space."

3) A combination of 1 and 2. This design combined "an axial panel feature, with short-cut travel, in natural curving lines."

Another renovation scheme, prepared by architects Joseph Freedlander and Max Schling, called for everything to be kept within view of those who passed the Park on the bordering sidewalks. The plan called for the elimination of all walls, fences, high trees, or memorial statues that would hide the plot. These plans, however, along with scores of others, were rejected. Not until 1934 was it officially announced that restoration would actually begin. Endorsed by Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the accepted design followed closely a scheme for the Park prepared by a Mr. Lusby Simpson, whose design had won first prize in a competition held by the Architects Emergency Employment Committee.

In 1936, an open-air library with 250 periodicals and books was established near the Library's west facade at the 40th Street entrance to the Park. In that same year, 21 loiterers were arrested — perhaps in a coordinated effort. The loitering situation apparently did not improve during the next eight years, however, for in 1944 Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia ordered the Park closed at 10 p.m.

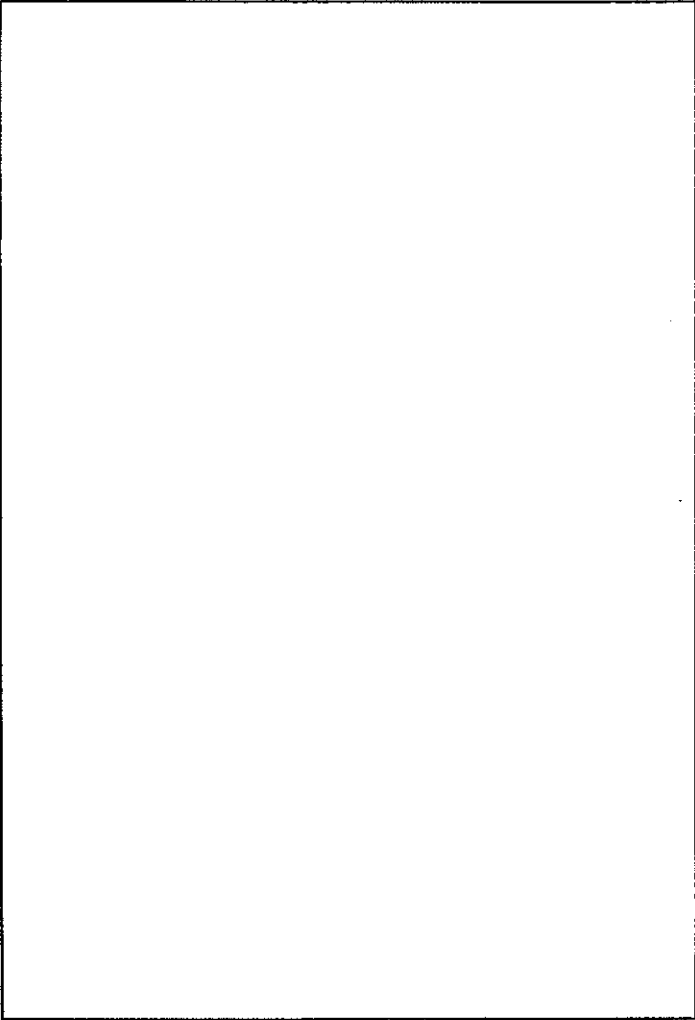
The years following 1944 saw the Park attracting more and more undesirables. In June, 1966, The New York Times reported the intense discouragement of one police officer who had been arresting drunks for disorderly conduct there, only to have them return to the

Park in short order when their cases were thrown out of court. Later that year, the Police Department supplied wooden police barricades to close off the entrances to the Park each night, and agreed to enforce the existing drinking ban more strictly.

In the late 1960s, demand arose for noon-time entertainment for the increasing numbers of mid-town office workers who poured into the streets at lunchtime. High school bands, clowns and jugglers performed in the Park. As the '70s arrived, so too did ecological awareness. In August, 1971, two large vacuum cleaners were donated by the Avenue of the Americas Association for a special "two-day clean up program." Enlarged maintenance crews planted ground cover, pruned trees, and handed out 250 litter bags to about 50 people in a partially successful effort to involve them in a continuing clean-up. [The idea of providing noon-time entertainment surfaced once again.] In September, 1973, a highly receptive noon-time crowd enjoyed a free concert given by the Musicians' Union Association. The success of this event was attributed partly to its spontaneity.

Wooden police barricades were again installed across the Park's entrances in October, 1973 – now at 9 p.m. – and periodic nightly patrols were established. The Times reported, however, that "several strollers squeezed past the 'keep-out' barricades to get into the Park even as the dozen or so policemen were chasing out a few other trespassers." Also prevalent that year were dice players who blocked sidewalks with their crap games.

In 1976, muggings and marijuana dealing entered the picture on a serious scale. The Times stated that in the first six months of that year 43 muggings were reported in the Park – nearly triple the number that had occurred during the same period the previous year. Arrests for the possession of marijuana soared from two to 52 in the same six months, for its sale soared from 0 to 10. Plainclothes narcotics agents and additional



police officers were assigned to combat the problem. In April, 1977, an environmental designer made a proposal for a "Library Park," in which the Park would be surrounded with safety grill-work, and the Library would serve as its only entrance. A library card would be the ticket of entrance. This idea was never pursued. In 1978, Alfred Loritsch, executive secretary of the Avenue of the Americas Association, credited constant police surveillance with making the Park "much safer" than it had been two or three years earlier.

This brief outline of the Park's history shows that Bryant Park has been the victim of changing social problems – problems, that when analysed point to the same defects in the original Park design: people on the surrounding sidewalks not being able to see into the park; visitors not being able to move comfortably into and around the Park; and the lack of amenities that support the positive activities people participate in.

# who are the park's visitors? what do they think of it?

A total of 142 interviews were held in Bryant Park, and the responses were compared with those obtained by Nager and Wentworth in 1974. An additional 105 people were interviewed on videotape. The vast majority of people using the Park come from the surrounding commercial area. Relatively few shoppers or tourists seem to enter. Office workers see the Park as a place to go for a break in the day, a place to relax and leave office cares behind. Shoppers and tourists use public spaces more impulsively; the immediate accessibility of seating areas, cafes or attractive settings is more important to them. Providing comfortable seating and eating areas that are visible from the street will encourage attendance by this sort of visitor. (The fact that tourists use the Bryant Park Cafe well into mid-afternoon supports this observation. See Demonstration Projects.)

About 75% of the Park visitors are "regulars." This is significant for three reasons:

- As a change in the Park occurs, these regular visitors can evaluate the change and comment to their colleagues on what they see, providing useful publicity for the Park.
- The success of the lunchtime and off-peak entertainment programs shows that it is possible to structure an entertainment package that has a pattern with which the park user can become familiar. The Monday-Thursday-Friday rhythm of the concerts sponsored last summer by the Music Performance Trust Fund established a solid following (50% of the spectators were found to have



come to the Park specifically for a concert). A similar rhythm could be established with a dance, rock or classical series. By being able to predict what will be taking place in the Park, a visitor can plan his outings and possibly encourage new visitors to come to the Park.

- A regular clientele is important for maintenance of the Park. With the restoration of the Park and the development of new seating areas, including tables, chairs and new food facilities, there will be fresh emphasis on cleanliness. If the maintenance program is restructured so that a single staff member becomes responsible for all maintenance aspects of a particular area, the maintenance staff members will begin to act as role models for the Park users. A relationship develops between maintenance staff and user based on continuous contact and association.

#### Eating

Nearly 50% of the visitors enjoy eating in the Park, but there are few facilities that accommodate eating comfortably. A few picnic tables near 40th Street and the recently opened Bryant Park Cafe provide the only alternatives to benches, the ground, the balustrade, a step, or one's lap as a place for eating lunch. The picnic area, despite its shabby appearance and lack of view and atmosphere, is heavily used. New, more comfortable areas that provide views of activities and the Park can become popular places for eating, meeting, reading or writing. By providing good-quality, comfortable seating it is possible to attract visitors who might otherwise avoid the area (as has been demonstrated at Paley, Greenacre and Exxon Parks).

### Meeting

The sociability of the Park — finding there an opportunity to meet, to see, to be seen — is important in establishing a feeling of comfort and security. More than 75% of the Park visitors feel that people-watching and socializing are part of their visit. Enhancing those programs which currently exist and creating new opportunities for seating, entertainment and other activities will help build an increased perception of Bryant Park as a hospitable place to visit. (Further discussion of entertainment is found in the section on Demonstration Projects.)

### Maintenance

According to the 1980 survey, the cleanliness of the Park is considered fair to poor by its users. Litter, untrimmed shrubs and grass, and unmaintained planting areas contribute to this feeling. The increase in Park maintenance through additional staff provided by the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation and the Parks Council has had a noticeable impact on cleanliness. Park regulars have commented on the improved appearance.

### Safety

Approximately 75% of the Park visitors think daytime safety in the Park is fair to poor. Approximately 60% of these visitors rated the safety on the front of the Library as fair to poor. When this many people consider an outdoor gathering place unsafe, strategies to increase visitors sense of security become essential.

To a question asking visitors what they like most about the Park, 68% of the responses indicate: its natural setting and natural quality. Next most frequent responses: its entertainment (19%), its convenience (15%), its people (13%). This strong impression of naturalness is one of the Park's greatest strengths. Any restoration program must en-

hance this quality and make it more accessible to everyone. Commercial facilities should be kept to a minimum, and should be located only at the active edges of the Park and in those areas where activity is important to security. Any commercial use allowed in the Park should not detract from the Park's "oasis-like" atmosphere.

The things that Park users like least about the Park, say the survey responses, are: marijuana dealers (44%); "undesirables" (22%); the social mix (16%); the maintenance (13%). Almost three times as many men questioned were disturbed by marijuana dealers as were disturbed by the presence of "undesirables." Women were disturbed equally by both.

Of the 125 terms used by survey respondents to describe the Park, only 33 were negative (such as: off-limits, drug-dealing, terrible, disgusting, dirty, run-down). The other 92 comments were positive: relaxing, oasis-like, refreshing, beautiful, fascinating, potentially great, people-oriented. This seems to indicate, that while visitors are aware of the difficulties of the Park, its positive attributes are more prominent in their minds than its abuses.



# the ways the park is used

The work-day cycle greatly influences the movement and activities in Bryant Park. Figure 2 demonstrates the population distribution during the day. Its significance is not the total number of people in the Park, but rather the attendance pattern. (Note the similarity to the patterns documented by Nager and Wentworth during the summer of 1974.)

## Morning Use

Activity starts in the Park as the first commuters step out from the Port Authority Terminal at about 8 A.M. Many of them pass by Bryant Park, and a few walk through on the way to work, occasionally stopping to read a newspaper, smoke a joint, or drink the coffee they have bought down the street. Most early-morning visitors are men. If facilities such as a coffee vendor or a small breakfast cafe were provided, this early-morning activity could be increased. Better visibility into the Park, easier walk-through circulation so that people have a choice of routes through the Park, and morning policing are factors which will encourage increased visitor use.

There is continued light use of the Park for sitting, reading, meeting, smoking during the morning by many different types of people. Few women appear in the Park at this time. As noon approaches, activity intensifies. The indigents who have slept there are up; a group of people who hang out most of the remainder of the day arrive; dealers position themselves for the lunchtime trade; and, this past summer, the bookstalls and the vendor at the Bryant Park Cafe set up their operations.

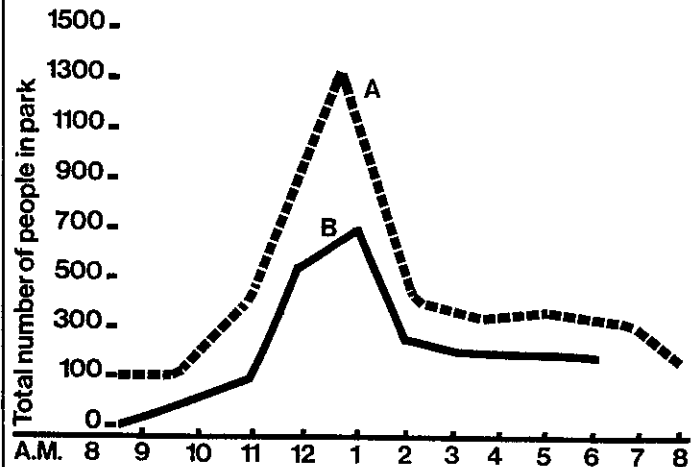
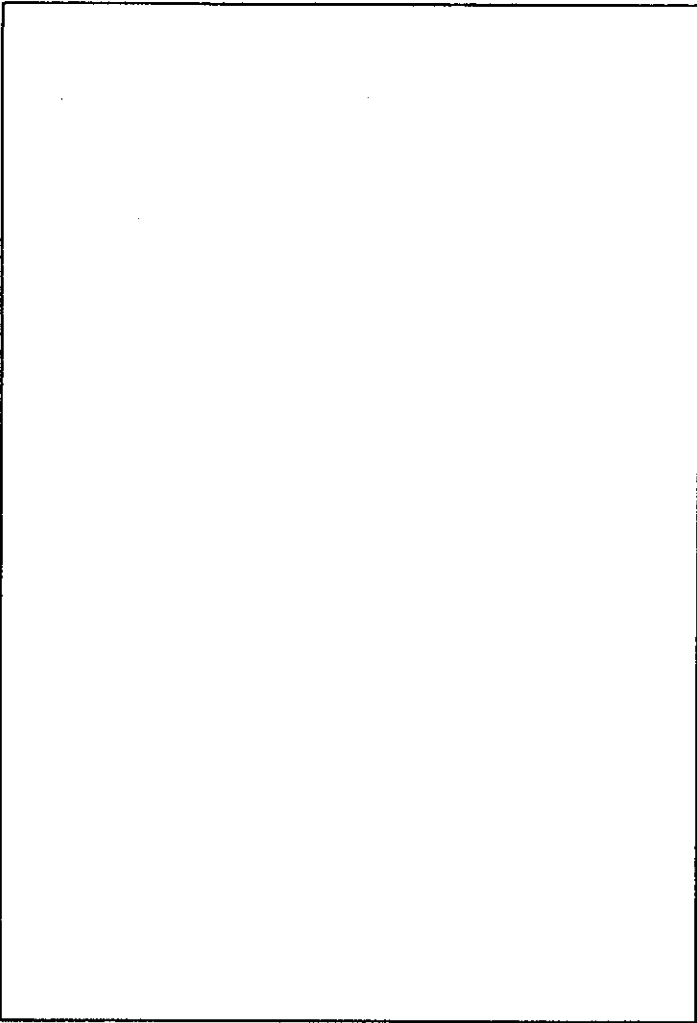


Figure 2 Representative Attendance Pattern

A Nager and Wentworth, 1974

B PPS, 1980



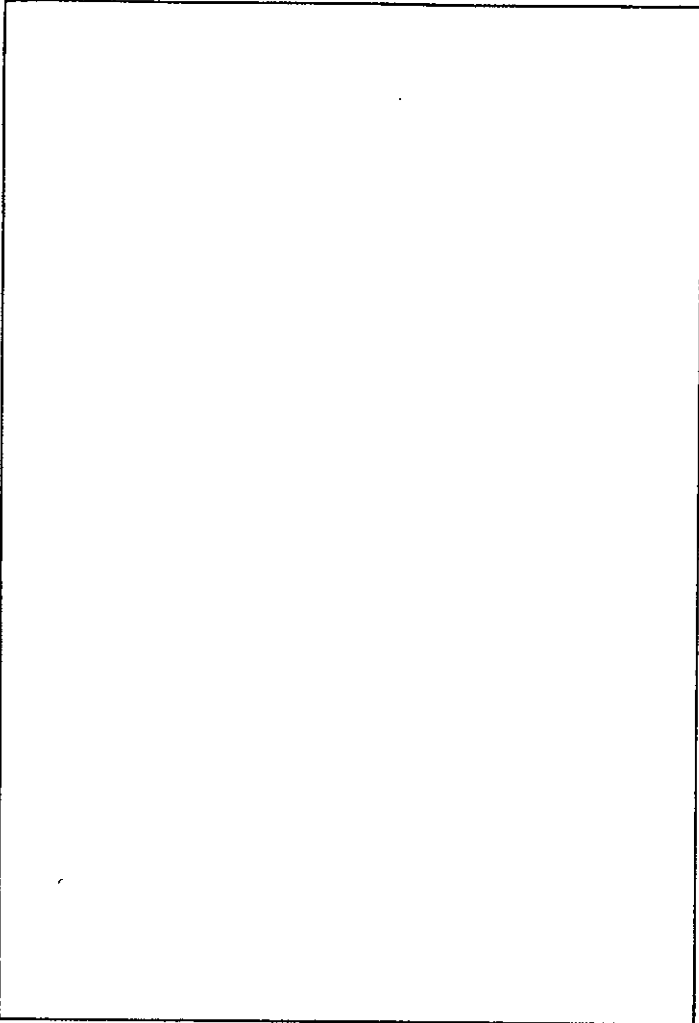
In the early morning hours, most of the Park's grooming takes place: walks are vacuumed, ivy beds raked, flowers watered, shrubs trimmed. This is the time when most of the landscape restoration and maintenance should take place; it is an ideal time to water the lawn so that the grass has a chance to dry before the lunchtime picnickers arrive. These maintenance activities also help to disperse the indigent population.

#### Lunchtime

The intensity of lunchtime activity during good weather appears to be directly related to how well the Park can seat visitors. In the late spring and early summer, before the sun causes outdoor activity to be unbearable, the Park reaches its peak use. It is difficult to find a bench to sit on. The balustrade functions at capacity, with people sitting on the railing and others standing nearby to talk with them. The lawn area is packed with people sunning, eating, reading. Chess players position themselves on the upper terrace and attract their regular crowd of spectators. The Park hums.

Along with this intense use of the Park comes intense marijuana dealing at the major access points and walkways. While marijuana dealing fluctuates according to the intensity of police surveillance, it is ever-present and visible. (The use of specific areas of the Park is described later in this report, accompanied by restoration suggestions to increase visitor use.) Bryant Park accommodates at least 1000 people an hour during the 12-2 PM lunch period — not including the number of people walking through or strolling around the Park. Concerts on the upper terrace have an average attendance of 250 people, half of whom come to the Park specifically for concerts.

At this time of day, the indigent population is less obvious. Some who feel uncomfortable with the influx of lunchtime users head out into the streets. Others move to the southwest corner of the Park, where they are less noticeable, hidden behind a tall shrub bed.



As the city becomes hotter in late July and August, seating under the trees becomes increasingly more desirable to people looking for a cool place to relax. The lawn becomes dry and bristly, and the few die-hard lawn sitters who come out in the heat of the day stay near the south hedge to get what little shade is available.

Seating often determines the numbers of people using any particular area in the Park. The upper terrace, with its attractions of chess games and entertainment, is well attended at lunchtime. The allees offer the only other bench seating in the Park. That is to say, only half of the Park has any form of formal seating. The fountain plaza is becoming a center of activity due to the opening of the book market, but the fountain rim offers the only seating in the plaza. The Park attracts a large lunchtime population, but accommodates them poorly. In short, the lack of additional seating and eating areas is a limiting factor on lunchtime visits to the Park.

#### Afternoon

As the intensity of the lunchtime activity subsides, the number of visitors begins to level off. Tourists, shoppers, the elderly, and the non-working become the main users. Use of all areas of the Park remains fairly constant. The bookstalls have been successful, remaining active until closing time. In the late afternoon, there is a slight rise in attendance as people leaving work pass through the Park on the way home. They sometimes stop to relax for a couple of minutes, wait to meet a friend, buy marijuana, or watch some of the entertainment that was offered last summer.

#### Evening

Evening activities have not yet been documented as extensively as those of daytime. Food services and night lighting would extend visitor enjoyment well into the evening. These measures would increase the feeling of security in the Park at off-peak hours.

# use of the park by women

Figure 4: Percentage\* of Women Using the Sub Areas of Bryant Park

Upper Terrace	25%
40th St. Allee	12%
Fountain Plaza	9%
42nd St. Allee	21%
Central Lawn	23%
Average:	19%

\*Figures are based on a one day sample and are for comparative discussion

The number of women in a park or plaza is an indication of the sense of security that these public places convey. A one-day sample (Figure 3) shows the percentage of women using all areas of the Park and the front of the Library on an hourly basis.

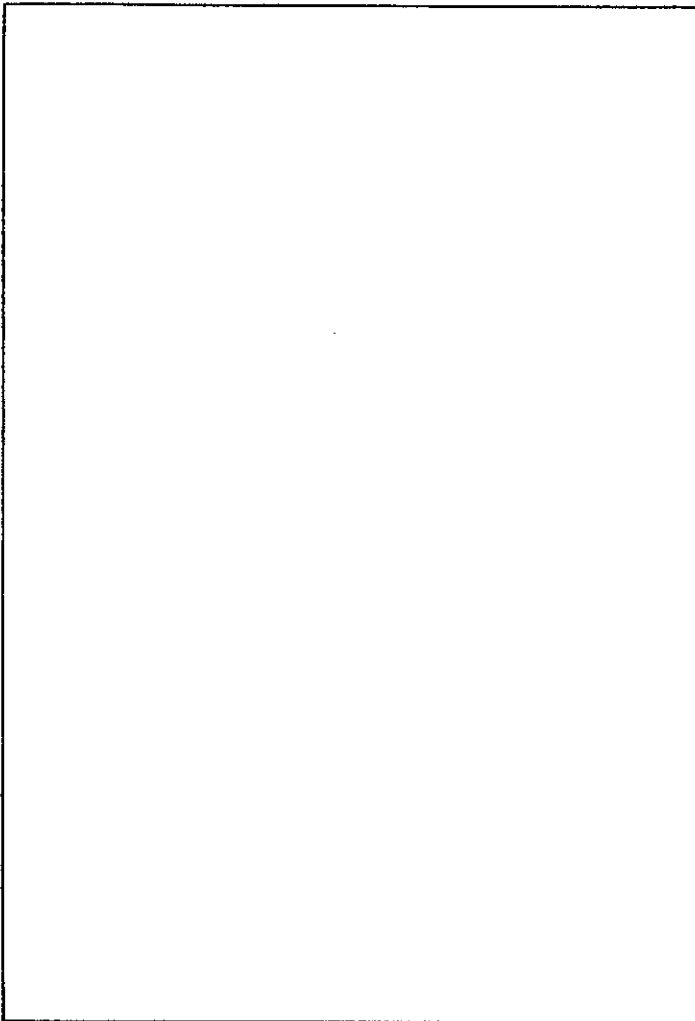
Figure 3: Percentage\* of Women Using Bryant Park and the Front of the Library

\*Figures are based on a one day sample and are for comparative discussion

	8am	9am	10am	11am	12am	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	Average
Bryant Park	0%	5%	7%	12%	20%	22%	16%	22%	21%	21%	19%
Library Front	14%	9%	10%	18%	31%	44%	31%	37%	26%	38%	32%

Few women enter Bryant Park until late in the morning; increased activity brings an increased feeling of security. During the afternoon, about 20% of Park users are women compared to 30% at the front of the Library, even though the Park offers many more seating opportunities. This would suggest that security is a major issue for women in Bryant Park.

Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution of women in five areas of the Park. The upper terrace was identified as a comfortable area by women during our interviews. There are lunchtime concerts and a variety of seating options. Here, women form approximately 25% of the daily population, but during lunchtime and the afternoon the percentage is closer to 33%. The lawn area is the next most popular area (23%), reflecting its availability for large groups of people getting together for lunch. In the surveys, women

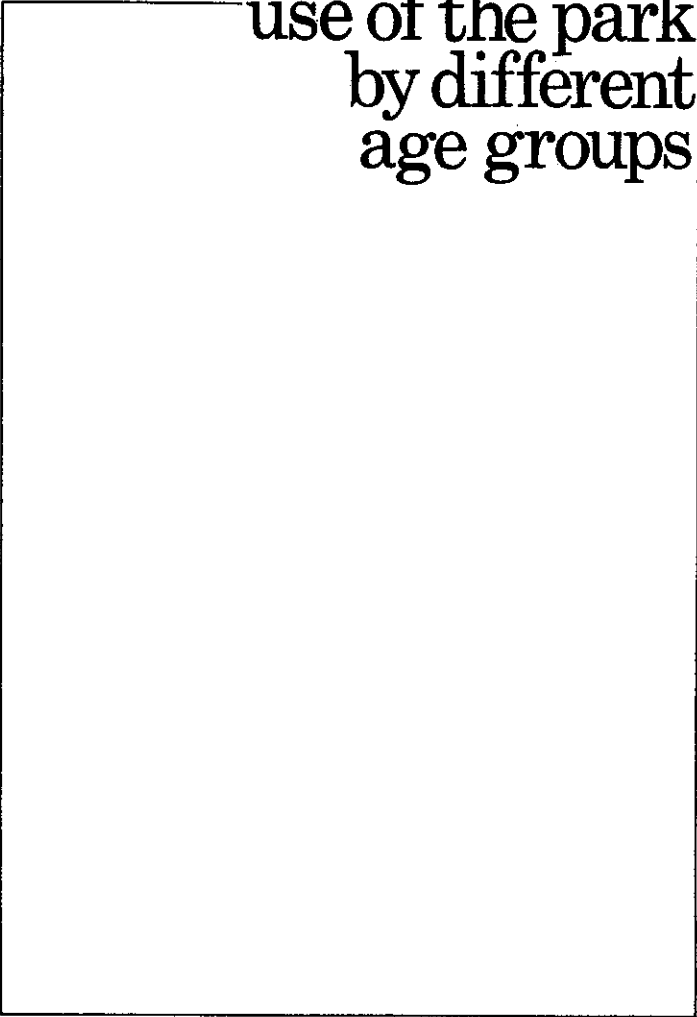


identified the northwest corner of the 42nd Street allee as an area they would avoid because of its aggressive marijuana dealing. However, during one day of activity mapping, dealing activity was almost non-existent, and this corner was the part of the allee most frequented by women. This indicates how fast Park use can change if the normal reason for avoiding an area is absent. Visitors can adjust their perceptions of an area, even if only for one day.

While seating opportunities in the 40th Street allee are similar to those on the 42nd Street side, there is a difference in its use. An average of 21% of the people sitting along the 42nd Street allee are women, compared to only 12% along the 40th Street allee. Many indigents congregate on the 40th Street allee during the peak use of the Park. The main generators of activity are on the 42nd Street side. The Park becomes more passive and quiet towards 40th Street, and the lack of activity and movement on 40th Street creates a less secure environment.

The fountain plaza attracts an average of only 9% women. The plaza is open, visible, active (with bookstalls) and secure (with added police activity). But it lacks seating. The fountain rim is not comfortable for long sitting or lunching. During another observation, approximately one quarter of the people at the fountain plaza were women. But the increase represented women who were browsing and buying at the bookstalls, not sitting.

## use of the park by different age groups



Most Bryant Park visitors are between 18 and 34 — the visible age group in most mid-town parks and plazas. This is not a true reflection of the age composition of people working in midtown or walking along the streets and reflects a lack of security and seating.

Age distribution in the Park is related to seating types. The benches with backs around the edges of the park are used mainly by older people; the flat benches by all age groups; and the balustrade and lawn, primarily by the young. Figure 5a shows the distribution of these seating types. It is possible to identify areas where the introduction on new seating types and configurations could create a more integrated age distribution. (See Figure 5b.)

The elderly feel much more at ease in areas where there are many other people like themselves, or people involved in non-intimidating activities. At the benches near entrances and along well travelled paths in the park, the elderly find this feeling of security.

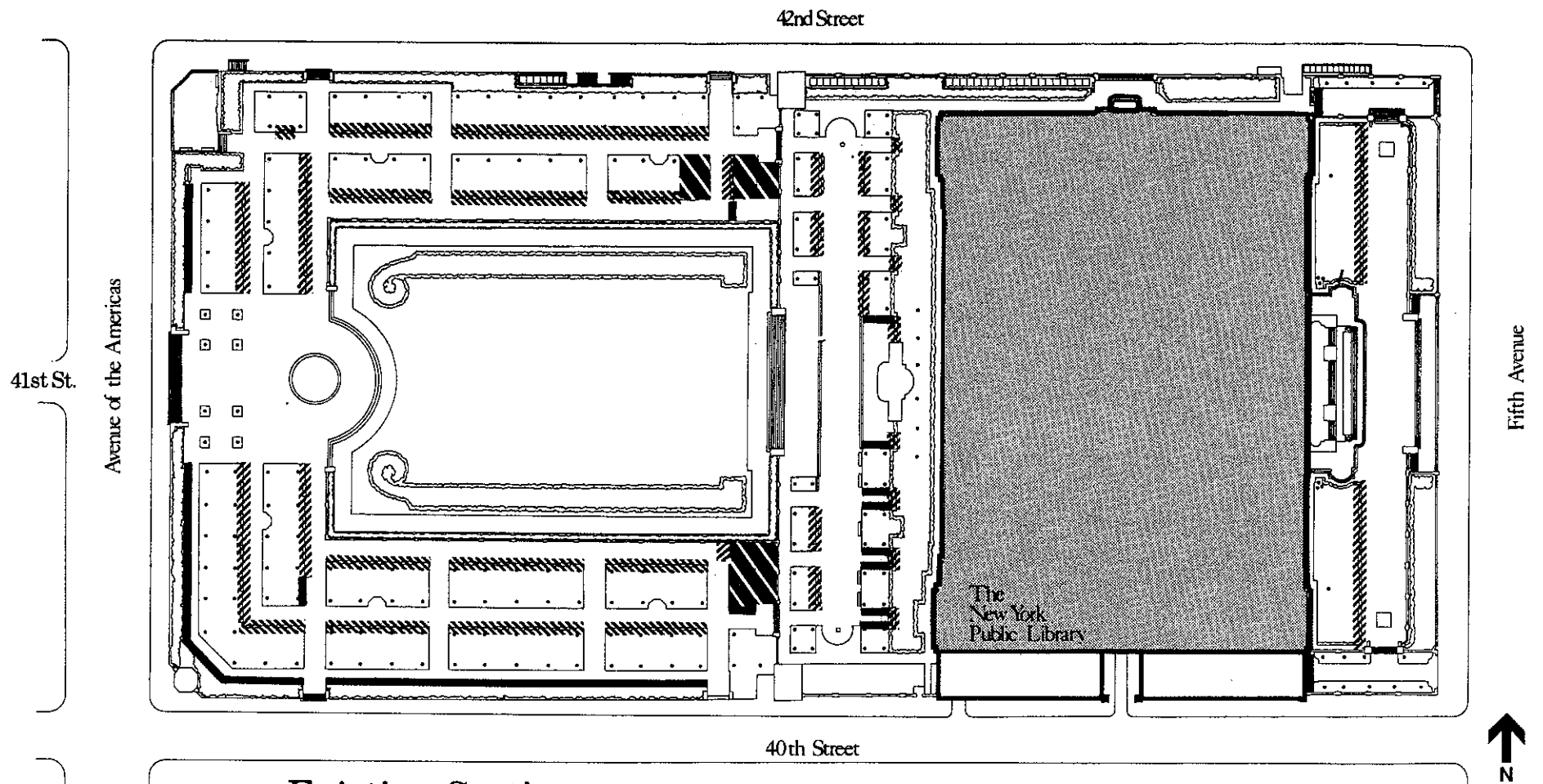


Figure 5a Existing Seating

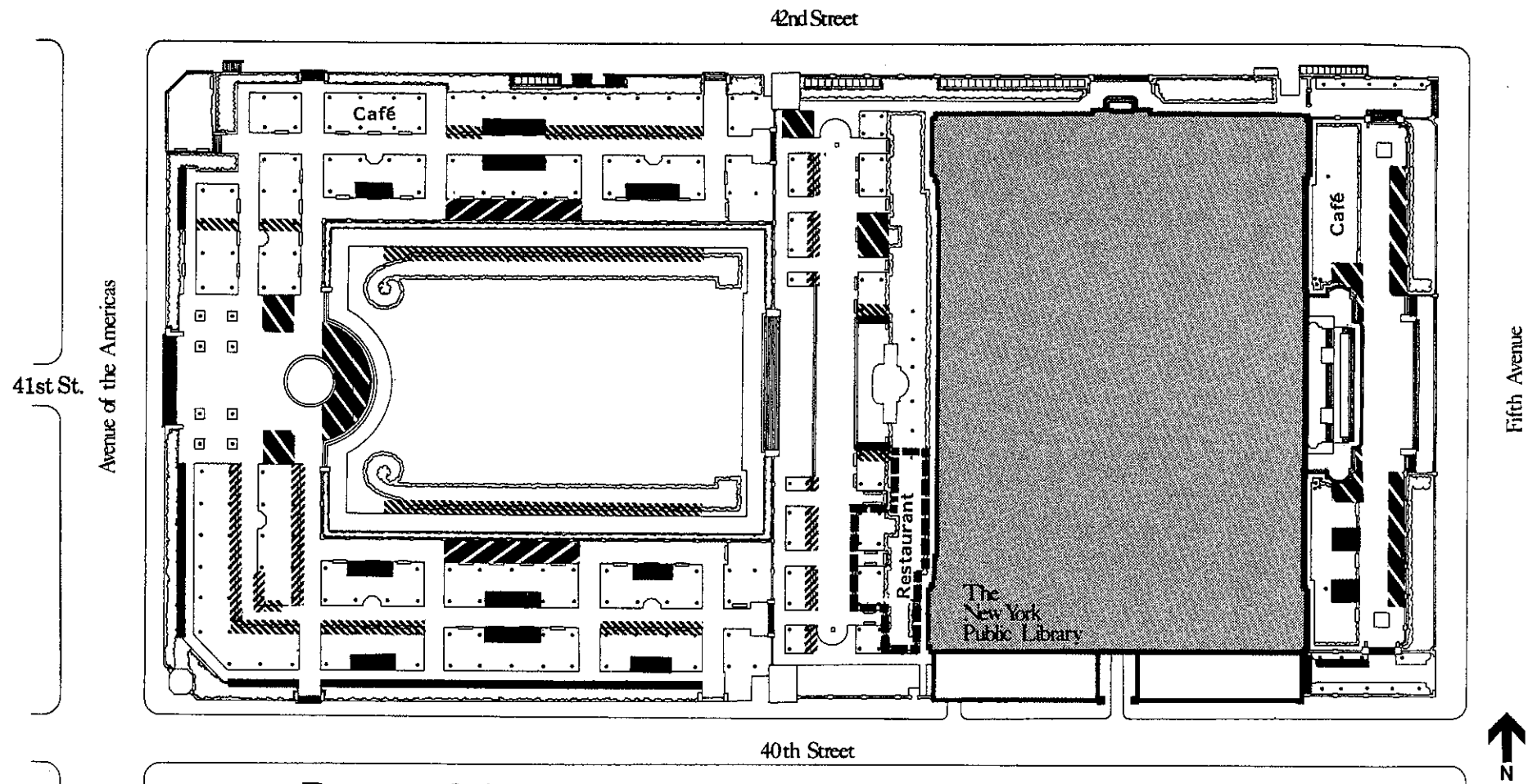


Figure 5b Proposed Seating Concept

- Benches with Backs
- ▨ Flat Benches
- ▧ Tables & Chairs



# the marijuana marketplace

The sale of soft drugs in Bryant Park and at the front of the New York Public Library is considered to be a major deterrent to the use of these areas by many members of the general public. Media coverage of sales and attempts to relate these sales to assaults in the Park have promoted a distorted view of the Park and its illicit activities. In fact, of the nearly 1000 arrests made in the last few years, less than a dozen were of dealers who were carrying anything more potent than marijuana.

In order to determine design, program, and management changes that might encourage the alienated public to venture into given areas of the Park, it is necessary to understand how the dealers operate, and factors supporting dealing in its present locations. Appendix A describes dealing patterns throughout the Library block in detail and indicates that barricades and increased police surveillance do shift dealer activity from affected areas, but do not basically alter the marketplace.

The marijuana marketplace is extensive and transcends all racial, economic, and social barriers. In a depressed economy, this marketplace has become a major source of income for many individuals. Dealers supply a demand much as any business does. While we cannot alter the demand, we can look at those aspects of the marijuana trade that make it unpalatable to many people.

In our interviews both in and outside the Park, it was not the dealing itself that bothered people, but rather the aggressiveness and blatant nature of the dealing. "Running the gauntlet" to pass through the Park is a common perception of users toward dealing activities. The very nature of a hustling life style, whether it be vending hotdogs or marijuana, means being in the center of the action — exposure to the greatest number of potential buyers. This accounts for the distribution pattern of dealers, as shown on Figure 6. These are areas for successful marketing of any product, and provided us

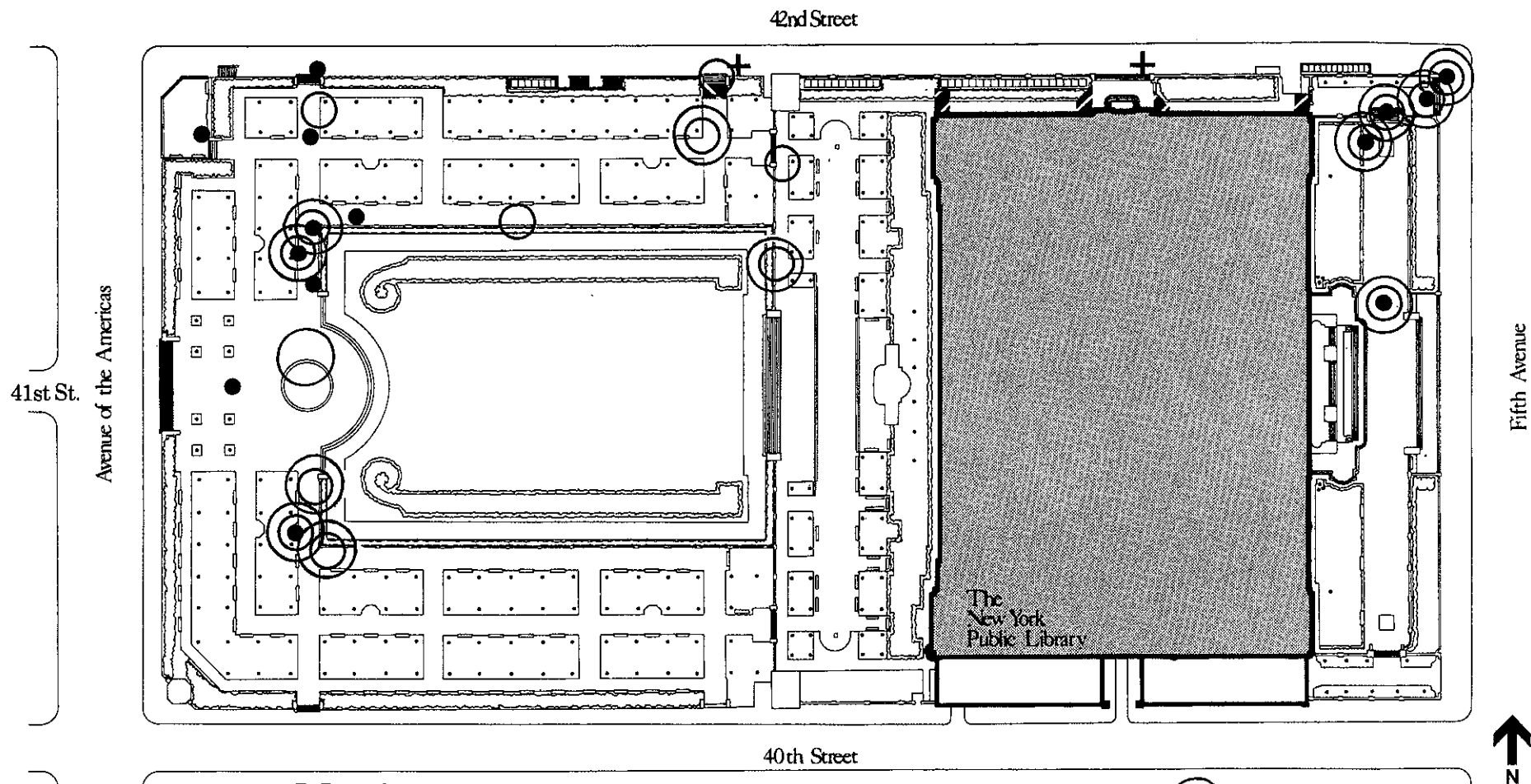


Figure 6 Marijuana Dealing Locations

- April 1980
- Following removal of barricades
- October 1980
- + Occasional locations
- ▨ Barricade locations

with a good indication of where other, more legitimate activities might succeed.

Part of the success of these location lies in the ability of the dealers to control these areas by their presence. "Positive" activity in the dealing areas is limited to walking by or sitting on a few benches. It is easy to keep control of an area where the points of access and number of activities is so limited. When the movement of pedestrians and the variety of activities increase to a level where it is difficult for dealers to keep visual control, the marijuana marketplace begins to weaken. If sales drop, the marketplace will shift to a more favorable location.

The key areas in the marijuana marketplace share the following physical and circulation characteristics:

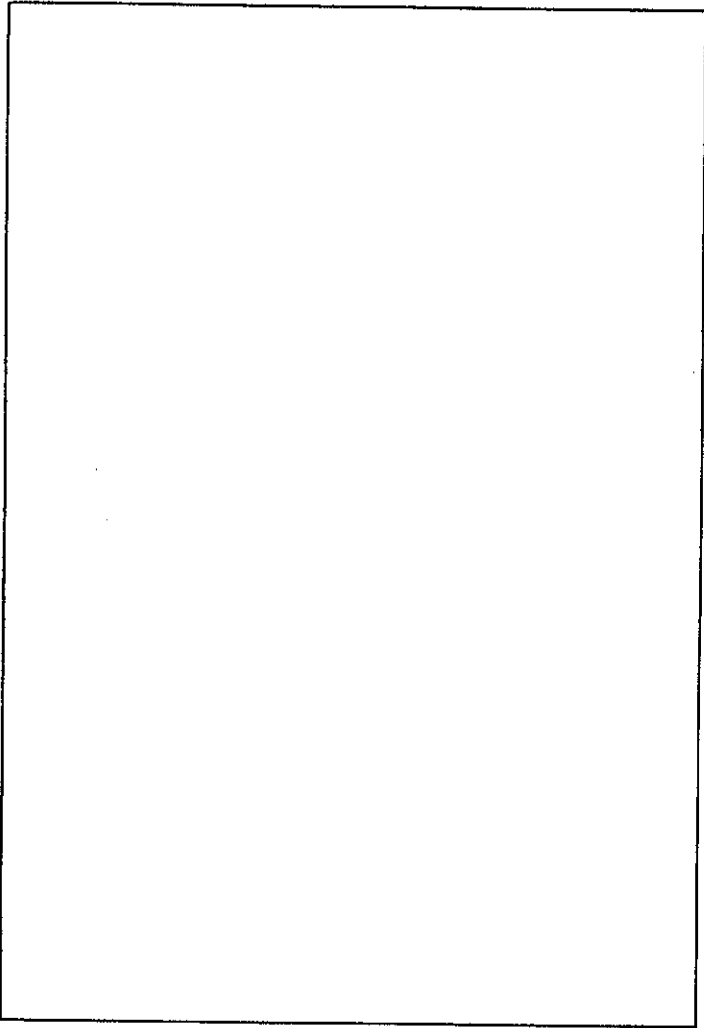
1. Limited visibility from surrounding areas. Elevated areas, trees shrubbery, walls and balustrades all constitute visual barriers. Note that the areas that are most open — the front steps of the Library, the Park lawn — are devoid of marijuana dealing.
2. Limited access. As explained in Appendix A, dealers locate themselves in a pattern that leads from young "runners," to intermediate dealers, to large dealers. The points of access to the main dealers are through narrow openings, such as the stepped entrances along 42nd Street or at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street. It is possible for one dealer positioned at the steps to control that entrance area, and to alert his compatriots of significant buyers — or to trouble.
3. Transition points. There is a tendency to deal not at a destination in the Park, but along a pathway that leads from the street to a destination. Therefore, we see concentrated dealing on the pathway



to the Lowell Fountain — not at the fountain; along the approach to the upper terrace — not at the chess, concert or eating areas; on the terrace approach to the Library — not on the front Library steps.

4. Unclaimed areas. Dealers most often occupy "leftover" locations, where other Park users have not staked claims. These areas often coincide with "transition areas," where walking past is the major activity. These areas usually have little seating; that which is provided is often less desirable than other seating nearby. Rather than attempt to occupy an area where dealing is proceeding, most Park users move to secure areas that they find more comfortable. Only a comprehensive program that establishes alternative uses for a marketplace area, such as legitimate vending or landscaping, will shift a dealing operation to another area.
5. High pedestrian volumes. Where pedestrian volumes are highest, there will be a large dealer population, in the absence of any other use that "claims" an area for legitimate use. Police activity at the busy 42nd Street and Avenue of the Americas corner has limited dealing to some extent, but this corner still ranks as the Park's primary marketplace. At the dealing location at the corner of 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, dealers can contact the tremendous number of pedestrians on the sidewalks at that corner.

Bearing these five characteristics in mind, one can start to identify the subtle factors in each sub-area that support marijuana selling, and to develop design and management programs that will diminish the marketplace. These concepts are presented in the section



entitled Restoration Program. Briefly, the program recommends the re-construction of the 42nd Street and Avenue of the Americas entrances into wide, terraced steps, removing visual barriers at the Park's edge. We recommend that the book market be slightly re-oriented from this year's location, and propose new cafes to provide a concentration of positive activities at the entrance areas. New access to the central lawn would permit a new circulation pattern, which would preserve the lawn and open up new areas for safe public use.

It is clear from the resiliency of the marijuana dealers in response to special events, increased Police activity, and new facilities in the Park, that an enforcement program alone is a temporary displacement measure. Developing new uses and responsible concessionaires will provide the needed atmosphere of security and comfort in the transition areas where abuse now occurs. The 1100 arrests of dealers and of smokers in the Park this year have had an impact in reducing blatant dealing. However, the changes in design or new activities installed so far will probably not force dealers to abandon key areas of the marijuana marketplace.

# security

Figure 7 Crime Complaint Summary\*

\*Source: New York City Police Department

January 1 - August 31

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u># Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Robbery	93	67	- 26	- 28.0%
Grand Larceny	22	23	+ 1	+ 4.5%
Felon Assault	11	3	- 8	- 72.7%
Rape	3	6	+ 3	+ 100.0%
Total	129	99	- 30	- 23.3%

Figure 8 Summary of Narcotics Arrests

\*Source: New York City Police Department

All of 1/1-8/31

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u># Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Midtown South Conditions Unit	170	293	+ 123	+ 72.4%
Summonses	330	334	+ 4	+ 0.1%

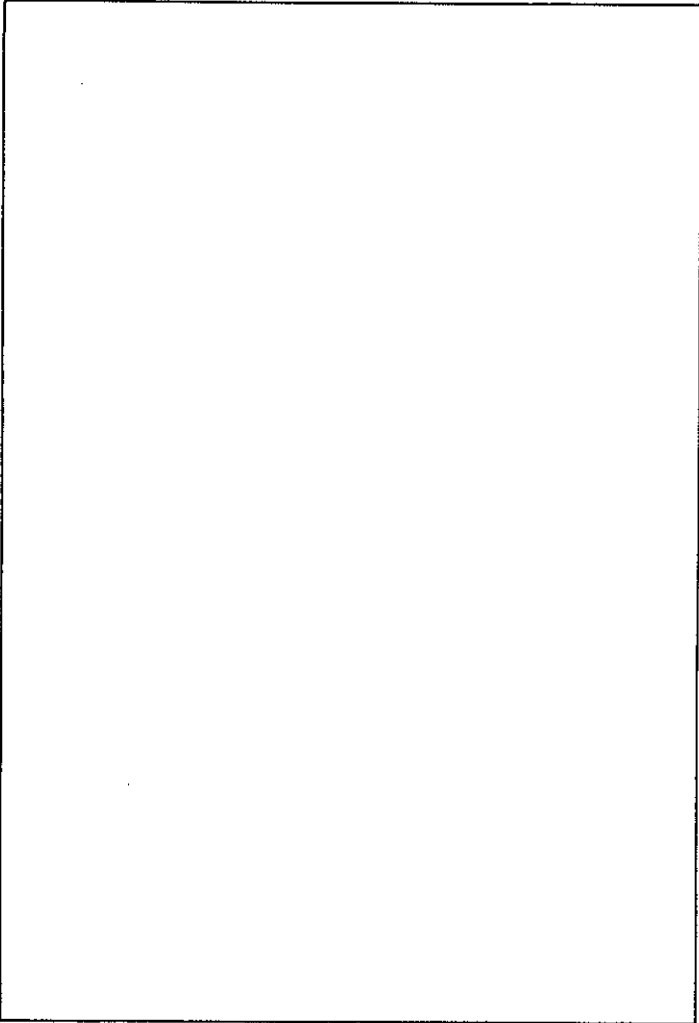
A sense of security arises from both the physical and the social environment. We form impressions from direct experience — seeing people like ourselves, seeing activities that we would like to participate in, seeing physical settings that offer protection without being hidden, taking a familiar path, seeing security staff, and being able to assess the atmosphere of a place. We also "experience" a place from word of mouth, media coverage, a quick glance as we pass, and previous direct experiences.

## Serious Crime in the Park

Police statistics for the first six months of 1980 and the same period in 1979 (summarized in Figure 7) show that most forms of crime have actually decreased in Bryant Park. Police believe that these are significant reductions in crime, and that the actual crimes committed are few relative to areas of similar size.

Rape complaints have risen from three to six. The victims are most often women who have entered the Park with a companion, or wandered in to "cool off" from the late night activity along 42nd Street. These assaults most often occur in the early dawn prior to police presence in the Park. Muggings also tend to occur in the very early morning. While robbery, grand larceny, assault, and rape occur in all areas of the city under many different conditions, a place that is obscure or isolated and lacks the presence of many responsible people is more prone to abuse.

The number of arrests and summonses issued for drug dealing and use in the first six months of 1980 (summarized in Figure 8) surpasses the total for the entire previous year. Most of these arrests were for sale of marijuana; relatively few were for possession or sale of cocaine and pills.



### New Police Activity

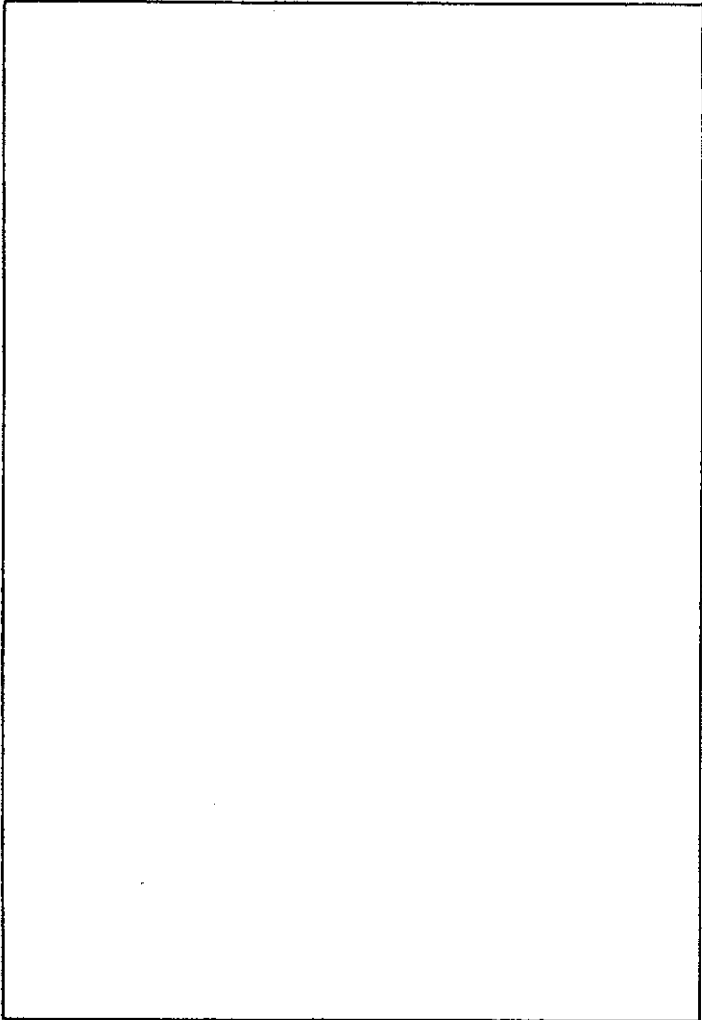
In the winter of 1979-80, the New York City Police Department and the Mayor's Midtown Enforcement Project focused their attention on Bryant Park, in an effort to control the marijuana marketplace. (Accounts of these efforts are found in Appendix A.) During the early summer of 1980, the Parks Council introduced bookstalls and a cafe to the Park; vigorous police presence was a requirement of the operators of these concessions. Partly due to the Police activity, marijuana dealing has become less blatant near the concessions, but is still present.

The Park is patrolled by two day shifts, with four uniformed officers on each shift (including the scooter patrol). A plain-clothes squad is also present in the Park during much of the day, participating in surveillance, arrests of dealers, and the issuing of summonses to marijuana smokers. Also, the officer on a Fifth Avenue beat passes through the upper terrace at the front of the Library at regular intervals. During lunchtime, as manpower permits, an officer is stationed at the flagpole on the north upper terrace. This area is under constant surveillance, and arrests occur regularly.

This vigorous Police effort has significantly reduced the visibility of drug dealing in Bryant Park. It must be maintained until the marijuana marketplace is replaced with other activities in the Park. Any reduction in Police activity will allow dealers to reclaim their lost territory.

### Alternatives to Police Presence

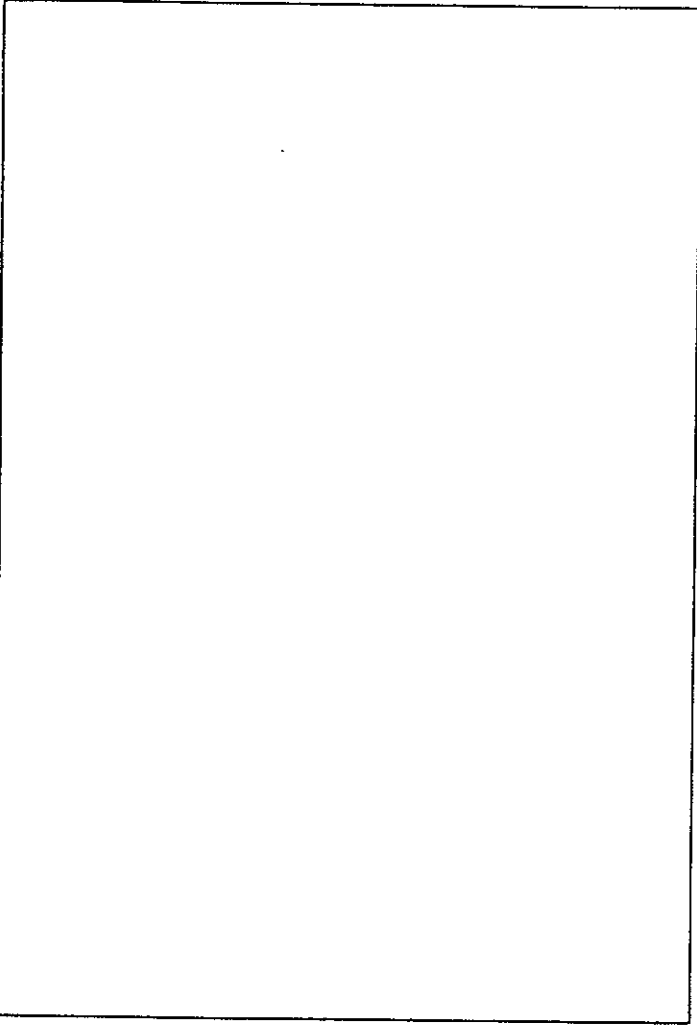
In order to lessen the need for a continued high level of police activity, it is necessary to develop a diverse Park user group that has a vested interest in the security of the Park. Several vest pocket parks in New York have become "self-policing." Concessionaires are



located at key control points, such as entrances. Their presence contributes to the security of the Park by drawing "good users" and by permitting surveillance by uniformed employees who are seen as "semi-official." Unless a concessionnaire has been co-opted by marijuana dealers, food and marijuana vending are not compatible. Push-cart vending is less likely to have a positive impact on an area, unless the amount of activity it generates is large enough to cause marijuana dealers to lose control of their surroundings. Since most push carts are seen as barely within the law, marijuana dealers sometimes look upon these vendors as comrades.

The selection and deployment of maintenance staff is also an alternative to a commitment of additional Police officers. The staff must be able to act with authority, and yet not intimidate Park visitors. If a maintenance man is assigned to a particular area of the Park, he becomes a comforting presence for users even if police are not visible. As a relationship between visitors and maintenance staff develops, part of the responsibility for security will be assumed by the regular visitor. When a staff person needs to enforce a Park rule, he will be reinforced by the reassuring looks of regular visitors. Under these circumstances, the violator is likely to move on without further trouble.





In a discussion of security, the possibility of a change in policing priorities must be recognized. At the moment, Bryant Park is favored by close police attention. If an equally important problem area requires a shift in manpower away from the Park, concessionaires, Park maintenance employees and Park visitors will have to help keep the park safe.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Maintain the current level of police manpower as new amenities are added in the Park. These programs should be monitored to determine when manpower commitments can be reduced.*
- *The Parks Department, Parks Council, and Bryant Park Restoration Corporation should meet frequently with officers patrolling the park, in order to evaluate and alter the security effects of the programs in the Park.*
- *Increase police presence in the Park between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m., and at the Avenue of the Americas plaza in the early evening.*
- *Continue to station one police officer on each side of the Park during lunchtime, along the connecting walls between 40th Street, the Lowell Fountain, and 42nd Street.*
- *Maintain a visible police presence at the top of the steps to the upper terrace on the 42nd Street side. This officer would have a commanding view of the midblock entrance and the upper terrace.*
- *Station a police officer at the entrance to the Library terrace at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street.*

## summary of use and abuse in bryant park

In earlier sections, many different factors were described as contributing to the present social state of the area. Figure 9, "Visual Barriers and Underutilized Areas," summarizes these observations. As indicated earlier, the narrow entrances into the Park afford the only unobstructed views of Park activities from the surrounding sidewalks. When Figure 9 is compared with Figure 10, Abused Areas, one can see that the dominance of the marijuana marketplace near these key viewing points accounts for much of the negative perception of Bryant Park developed by passersby.

At the mid-block entrances on 40th Street and 42nd Street, visual access into the Park is blocked by the balustrade and shrub border around the central lawn. The location of the Parks Council's Bryant Park cafe at the 42nd Street entrance has given the public a positive activity to witness as they pass by. But at 40th Street, there is no activity to draw the pedestrian into the Park. The good activities of the central lawn are not visible from the street at all.

Along the 42nd Street side of the Library, the elevated walkway behind a close-columned balustrade and shrub bed is hidden away from people on the sidewalks. As a result, many Park visitors do not feel safe on the walkway.

The limited visibility of the terrace level at the front of the Library permits active marijuana dealing behind the 42nd Street entrance. The front steps of the Library are totally exposed; many visitors feel comfortable sitting where they can see and be seen. At the 40th Street end, visibility and access is somewhat limited by the flower and hotdog vendor at the entrance. The corner is often in shadow, and not a cheerful sitting area. The height and the close-columned balustrade virtually exclude views from the street to activities on the terrace, and prevent people sitting on the terrace from seeing the street life of Fifth Avenue.

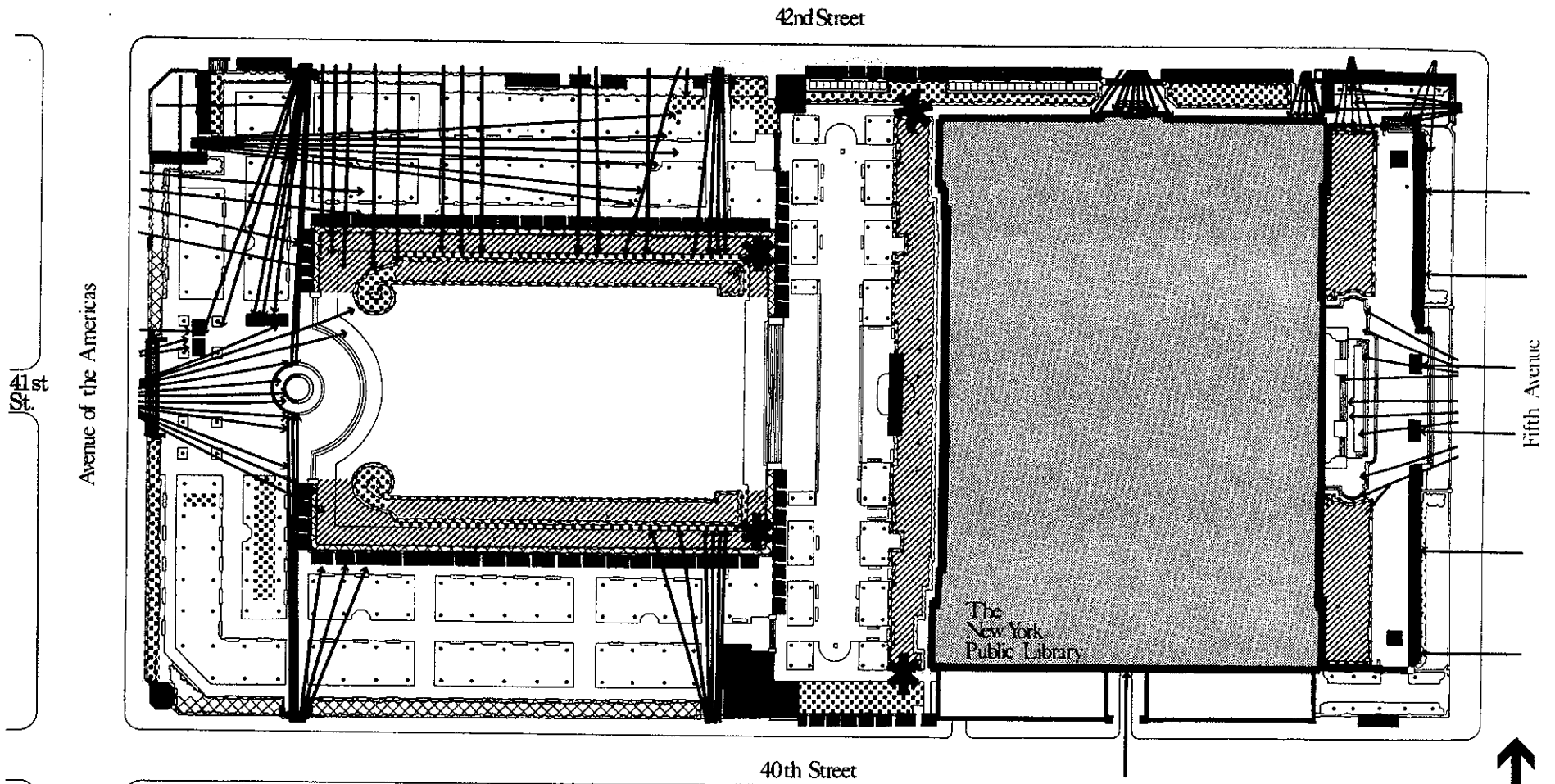








Figure 9 Visual Barriers and Underutilized Areas

-  Conflicts
-  Physical Barriers
-  Solid Vegetation
-  Filtered Vegetation
-  Dead Areas
-  Visual Access

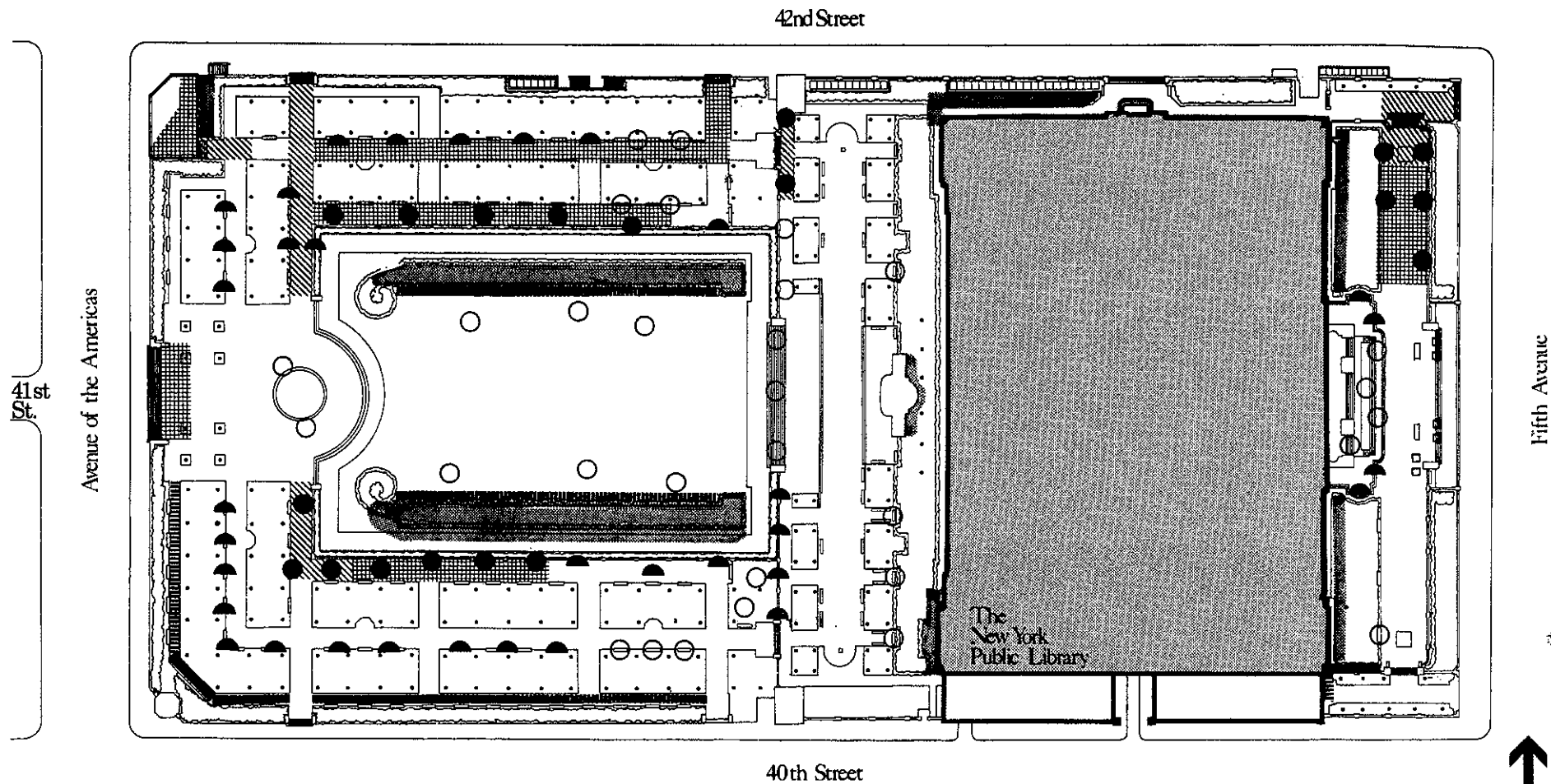
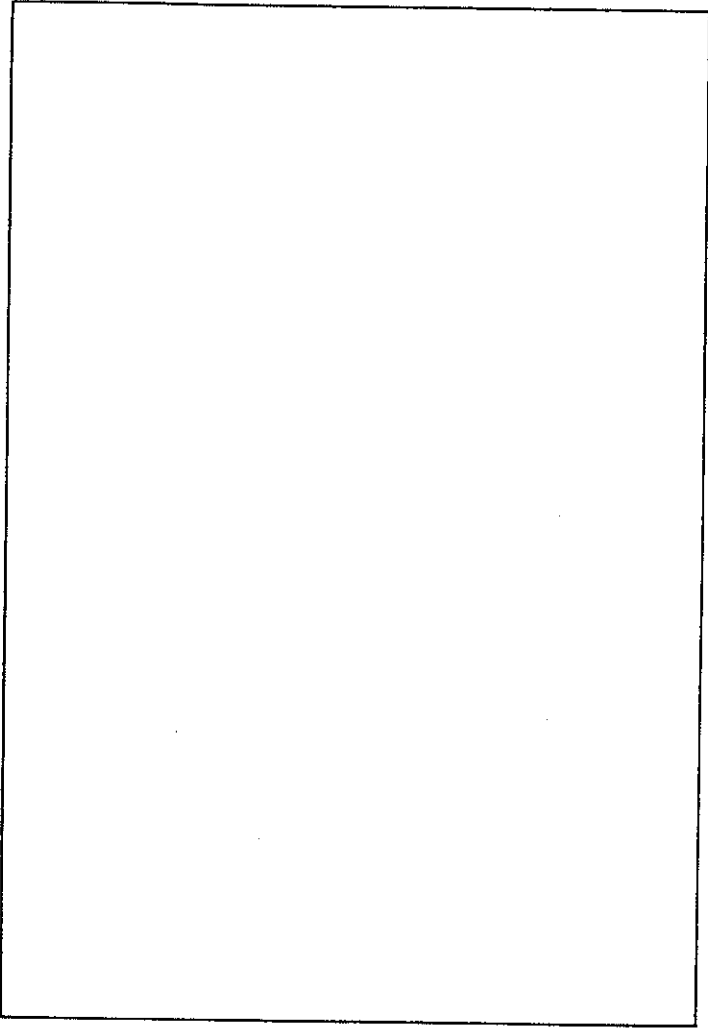


Figure 10 Abused Areas



The points in Figure 9 described as "dead areas" are greatly under-utilized and abused. These areas have been used as urinals, hiding places for marijuana supplies, and unobserved places for rapes and assaults.

Along with the sale of marijuana mapped on Figure 10 is the incidence of marijuana smoking in the Park and at the front of the Library. Marijuana smoking is related both to the marketplace -- "if it is secure to sell here, surely it is secure to smoke here" -- and to age. Areas with higher percentages of younger people have a higher incidence of marijuana smoking.

The 40th Street sleeping area is used by indigents throughout the day, concentrating on the Avenue of the Americas end during lunchtime. Indigents sleep on the lawn in the early mornings and late afternoons, when lunchtime users are not present.

One last abusive activity of note is the presence of voyeurs at the front Library steps. The information signs at the base of the steps and the corner of the balustrade near the steps become a base for men standing and looking up toward the women sitting on the elevated area of the steps.

The combination of Figures 9 and 10 provides us with a map of abusive activities in Bryant Park. Our recommendations for the Park are an attempt to eliminate these abuses by encouraging "positive uses" with both design changes and new facilities.

concept

# restoration program

The restoration concept proposed for Bryant Park and the front terrace of the New York City Public Library has evolved not only from on-site work conducted by PPS, but also from previous work of other organizations and individuals. The restoration concept presented in the following pages reveals how the tools of design, management and programming can be used together. For example, if design changes permit people to move into and around the Park comfortably, the Park will rebuild a constituency that is concerned about its grooming and activities.

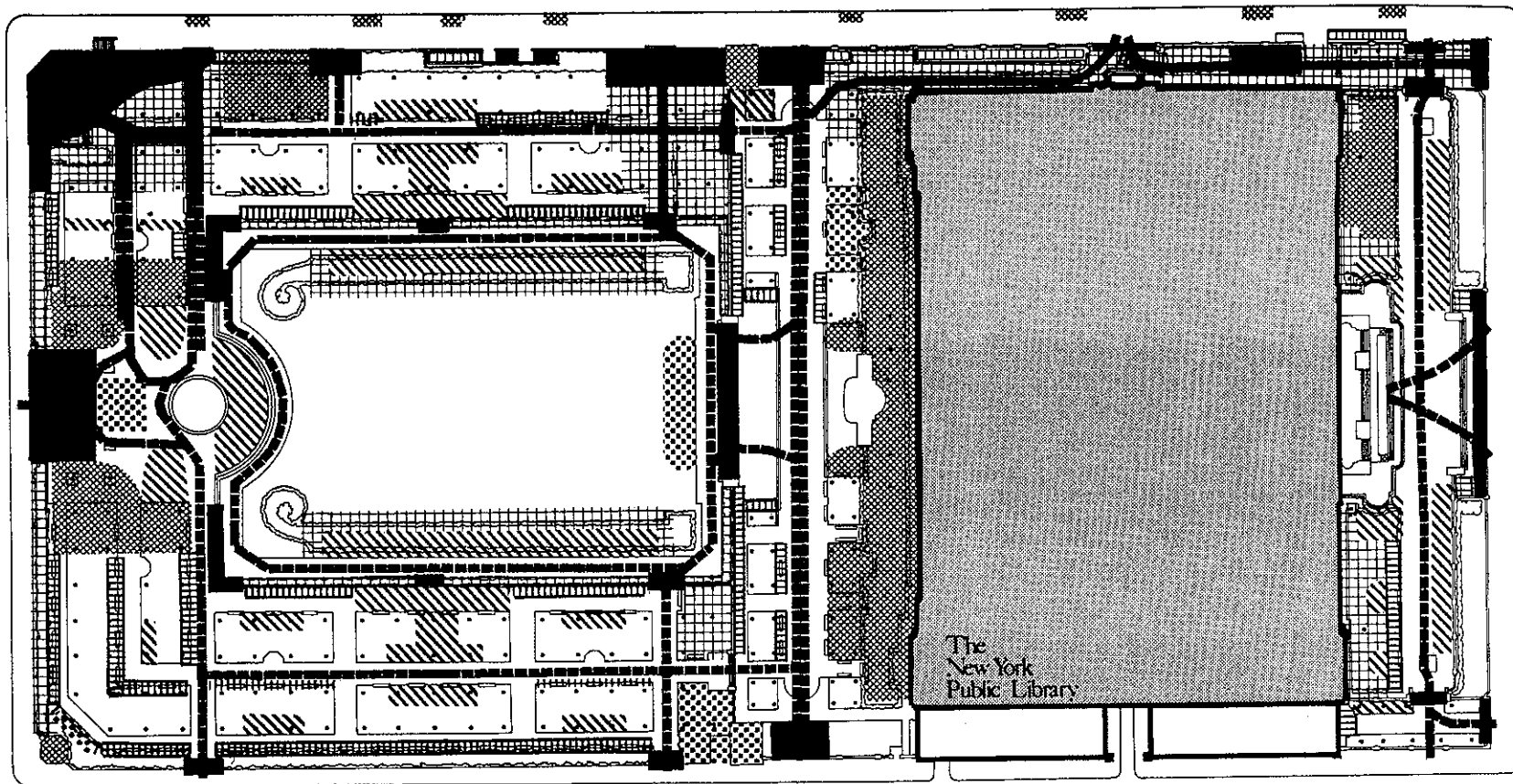
The sections on External Circulation, Access, and Internal Circulation recommend ways to encourage potential visitors to enter the Park and to make their pathways through the Park both attractive and safe. Then, we discuss the present and potential use of each area of the Park. Objectives are established for each area, and specific recommendations indicate how those objectives could be achieved. Many of our recommendations rely upon the universal sport of people-watching. Areas that are currently intimidating for many visitors could host new activities, and draw new users, if our recommendations are pursued.

The recommendations (see Figure 11) vary in scope from minor alterations (such as replanting neglected ivy beds) to more ambitious capital programs (such as the reconstruction of the Avenue of the Americas Plaza at 42nd Street). However, we do not believe that minor changes in seating types, the location of vendors, or new maintenance programs will provide a permanent solution to the ills of Bryant Park. The fundamental ills of the Park stem from its design concept, which limits visibility and access.

41st St.

Avenue of the Americas

42nd Street



40th Street

Fifth Avenue



Figure 11 Conceptual Plan

Existing Seating

Enhanced Seating Opportunity

Redefined Access

Commercial Use

New Landscaping

Existing Landscape

Public Activity Center/Service

## external circulation

Correction of these deficiencies will require sizable amounts of money. What we can provide is a corrective re-design of some elements of the Park to increase daily use and security despite the Park's fundamental design flaws.

A retaining wall topped with a wrought iron fence and narrow entrances combine to separate Bryant Park from its surroundings sidewalks, not only physically but psychologically. The wall and narrow entrances have diminished visibility into the Park and casual surveillance from the street, contributing to endless social problems since the Park's opening. In spite of tree branches overhanging the 42nd Street sidewalk, one does not have an impression of walking along the side of a park. The newsstands, telephone booths and subway entrances along the street have further reduced views into the Park.

Along the Avenue of the Americas, the difference in elevation between the sidewalk and the Park is about three and one-half feet. Near 42nd Street, shrubs behind the wrought iron fence once made it almost impossible to see into the Park, although they were removed in the summer of 1980. At 41st Street, the 65-foot wide entrance was intended to provide a strong visual connection across the lawn to the Library, but this view is best from across the street. The difference in elevation between the sidewalk and the Park necessitates a flight of twelve steps — which the average person cannot see over.

The 40th Street edge of the Park is a quiet walkway. This street, because it is not a major traffic route and is considerably narrower than 42nd Street, has a different atmosphere. Its edge is usually in the shade of the buildings on the south side. The Park's trees provide a balance to those buildings. The retaining wall (2'8" at its highest point),





42nd street

the iron fence, and the frail bushes at the Park's edge are less of a visual barrier here. Pedestrian volumes are much lighter than on 42nd Street, but do reflect the same early morning and late afternoon surges.

#### General Objectives

Bryant Park should have a visual impact not only on those who use it, but on those who pass by. Increasing the Park's visibility to and relationship with the sidewalk need not reduce its sanctuary quality. Our general objective is to enhance awareness of the Park from the sidewalks, and to extend the Park's atmosphere beyond its boundaries. As for specific Park edges:

#### 42nd STREET

##### Objectives

- to provide a promenade atmosphere along the sidewalk that will focus pedestrian attention on the Park and Library.
- to provide greater visual and physical access to the Park.

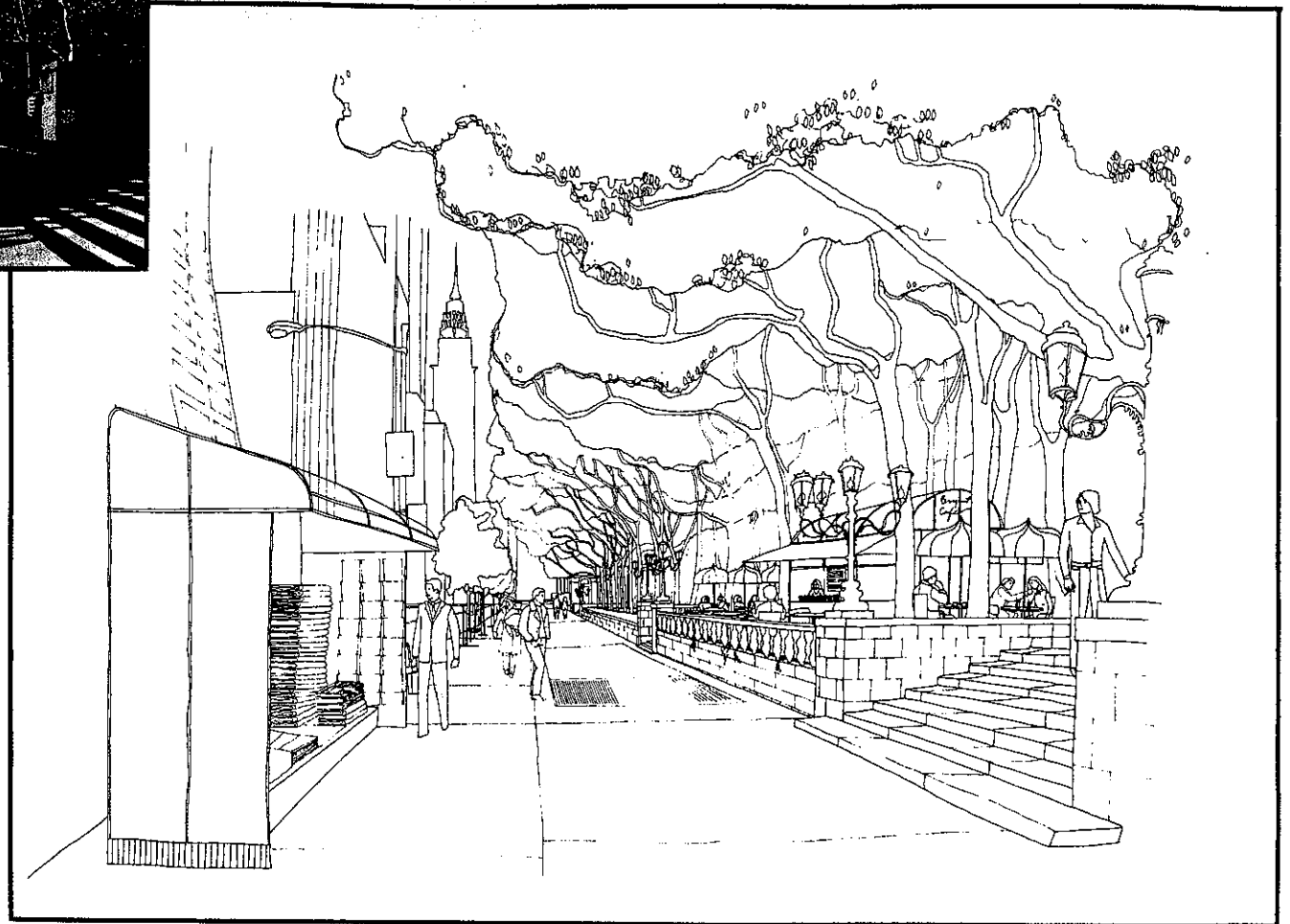
##### Recommendations

- Relocate vendors, newsstands, and telephone booths to curbside.
- Add new curbside uses that create a promenade atmosphere, such as artists, displays, and information.
- Provide light fixtures of a pedestrian scale that will enhance the Park's character.
- Provide seating along the street at places that will not cause congestion.
- Increase the width of entrances to the maximum possible without compromising the edge activity of the Park — approximately 65 feet.
- Provide concessions at the Park's edge that serve both the street and the Park.
- Remove the wrought iron fence from the retaining wall.

Existing



42nd Street Near  
Avenue of the Americas



Proposed

avenue  
of the  
americas

access

- *Continue landscape rehabilitation, removing shrubs and adding flowering plants where desirable.*
- *Provide information on Park events at bulletin boards on the street.*

#### Objective

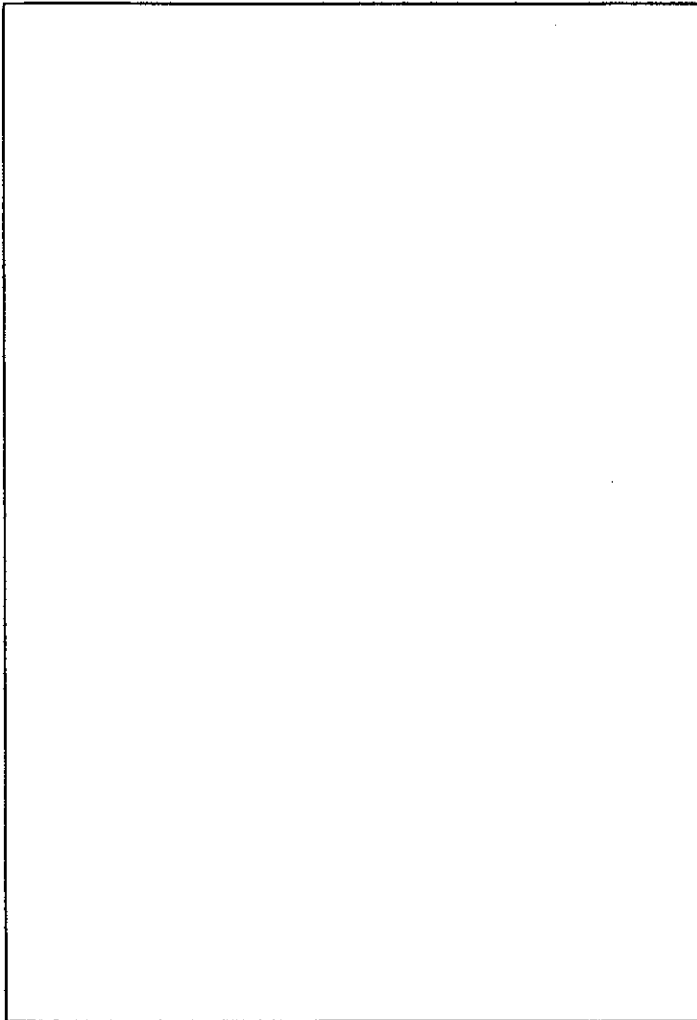
To increase the visibility of the Park to pedestrians on the adjacent sidewalks.

#### Recommendations

- *Re-landscape the area of the Park adjacent to the sidewalk between 40th and 42nd Streets, lowering the elevation of the Park to the height of the retaining wall.*
- *Re-design the 42nd Street entrance (see the section on "Access").*
- *Remove the wrought iron fence from the retaining wall.*

Bryant Park is visually inaccessible because of its elevation above the surrounding sidewalks, and because its wrought iron fences, set atop cut-stone walls, are often backed by shrub borders near the Library. Visual access along 42nd Street is greatly impaired by a wall topped with a dense stone balustrade. Even entrance pillars are so massive that they almost overpower the entrances to the Park.

Where passersby can see into the Park, they probably do not like what they see. Figure 9 (Visual Barriers) indicates the sight lines possible for passersby into the Park.



Note the location of those points that are most clearly visible. A comparison of this map with the abuse map (Figure 10) indicates that marijuana dealing occupies very visible positions within the Park and at its entrances.

The narrow entrances and lack of visibility into the Park discourage "impulse use." That is, the passerby does not have enough time to view any favorable activity in the Park, slow his pace, then make the decision to enter the Park. By the time all this has happened, the typical pedestrian has passed the entrance. His view is again blocked by fence, hedges, or balustrades. At the 41st Street entrance on Avenue of the Americas, which is wide enough, the 5'8" difference in elevation prevents a view into the Park. During a performance at the fountain plaza, a crowd can be seen from the street, and sounds from the performance filter over the sidewalk, whetting people's curiosity. Many passersby walk up a couple of steps, then stop.

Not all the step space at 41st Street and Avenue of the Americas is needed for circulation, so the steps often become seating for people who watch the passing parade on the sidewalk. The steps, as they become active as walking, sitting and performance areas, become too active for comfortable use by indigents and marijuana dealers — note the lack of both types of users on the front Library steps (Figure 6). The marijuana dealing at the 41st Street entrance therefore does not occur on the steps, but rather back on the fountain plaza.

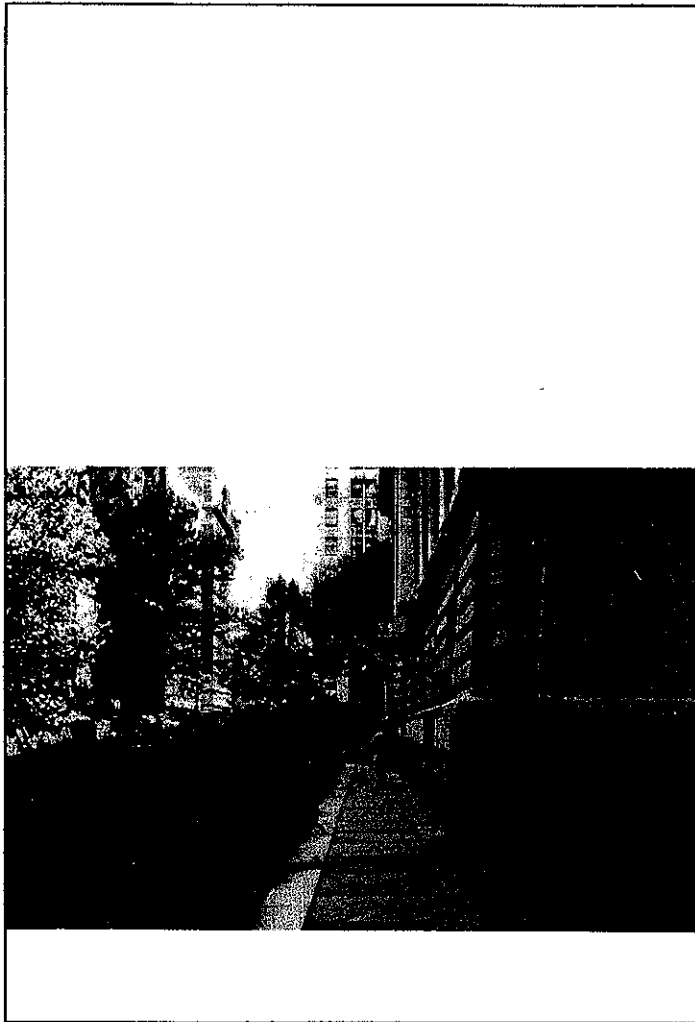
The design of the Avenue of the Americas plaza at 42nd Street almost denies its proximity to Bryant Park. The massive base for the statue of Jose de Bonifacio de Andrada and the stone retaining walls at the edge of the plaza obstruct views into the Park. Generally, a person is perched on the wall at the top of the narrow stairs — often a marijuana dealer.

The Plaza has three benches. Most often two of the benches are occupied by indigents and later in the day, marijuana dealers. Their constant presence indicates that the plaza does not function well. Its design does not provide a focus for the statue, nor easy access to the Park. The other function of the plaza — as a corner short-cut — is hampered by the two steps that delineate its perimeter.

The remaining four entrances off 40th and 42nd Streets are all sixteen feet wide. These narrow entrances can easily be controlled by one or two people who station themselves on the steps. Where people must bypass an individual who is seen as a threat, their anxiety about the Park is increased. They can choose to endure the additional tension, find another entrance that is "open" or avoid the Park altogether.

Along the side of the Library on 42nd Street is an elevated walkway that connects Fifth Avenue to Bryant Park. It is the only direct connection between the Library and the Park. This narrow walkway has been the focus of considerable discussion by the Police and Parks Department, and has periodically been closed off with barricades. It has been a preferred area for dealers, as they can have complete visual control of the walk and be hidden from street view by the wall and balustrade. The tall shrub bed adjacent to the walk further reduces its visibility.

There are at present no entrances to Bryant Park that allow access by physically handicapped people. Contract documents for the construction of new entrances to the back Library terrace are now being prepared for the New York City Parks Department. This capital project will provide for a stepped entrance from 42nd Street, a regrading of the terrace, and a ramped entrance at 40th Street. This project will also greatly reduce the potential for crime on the terrace by eliminating areas in which Park visitors can be trapped.





The front of the New York Public Library can be reached by two narrow entrances off Fifth Avenue that lead to the front terrace, or, by the impressive front entrance, framed by the Library's lions. The two 20-foot wide entrances that lead to it near 42nd and 40th Streets are obstructed by various forms of vending. Hotdog and flower vendors virtually block the entrance near 40th Street, while marijuana dealers control the entrance near 42nd Street. The upper terrace, which runs the entire length of the Library, is not recognized from the street because it is hidden behind a heavy balustrade. Many people have no knowledge of it at all.

#### General Objectives

- The width of an entrance should reflect the desired level of activity in that particular part of the Park. Along active edges where it is desirable to attract people, the entrance should be as wide as possible. Quieter areas of the Park require less interaction with the street, and can have an entrance that only reflects the need to prevent control by undesirables (Figure 12: Proposed Access.)
- Access points should be introduced where safety is an issue. Park visitors should know that it is possible to move into and out of the Park without being trapped.
- Clearly identified access for handicapped persons should be provided on all three sides of the Park.
- All entrances should be identifiable from a distance during the day and at night.

#### General Recommendations

- *Reduce flights of steps to banks of four or less with intermediate landings. The new*
- *step configuration will make the change in elevation appear to be less. Wider banks of steps and wide landings will also reduce the perception of a change in elevation.*
- *Use low rise, long run steps similar to the front Library steps.*

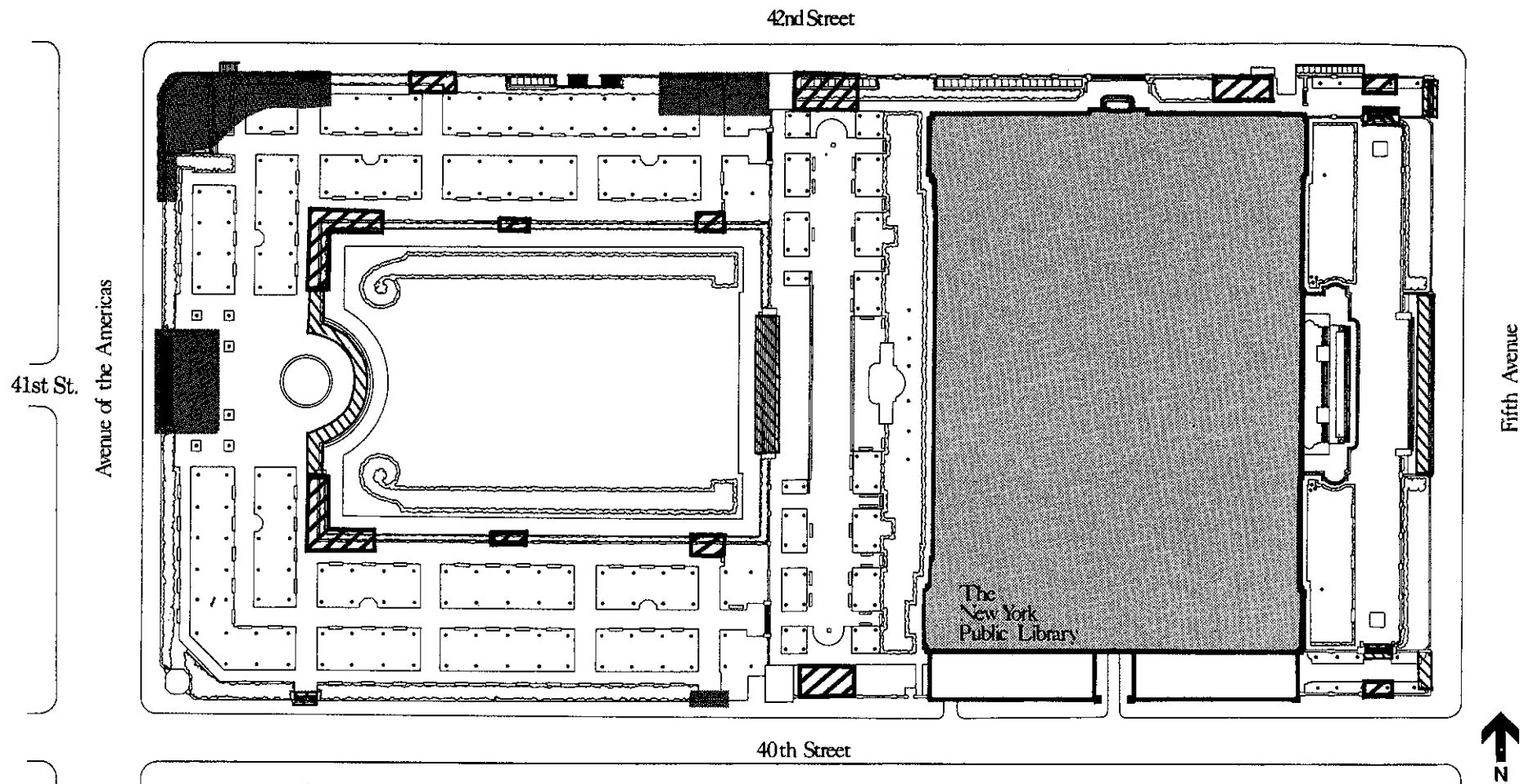





Figure 12 Proposed Access

-  Unchanged Access
-  New Access
-  Redefined Access

41st street  
entrances

avenue  
of the  
americas  
plaza

- *At either side of access points, provide new lighting fixtures that will mark them visible day or night.*
- *Remove seating that could encourage loitering by undesirables, creating a "gauntlet" atmosphere near narrow entrances.*

#### Objectives

- To encourage entrance into the Park.
- To provide activity at the entrance area.

#### Recommendations

- *Create a forecourt to the fountain plaza by building wide landings between three equal flights of steps. The steps surrounding the forecourt would provide additional seating areas back from the street.*
- *Arrange for food vendors to occupy a part of the forecourt from early morning until late afternoon.*
- *Encourage the use of the forecourt by street entertainers.*

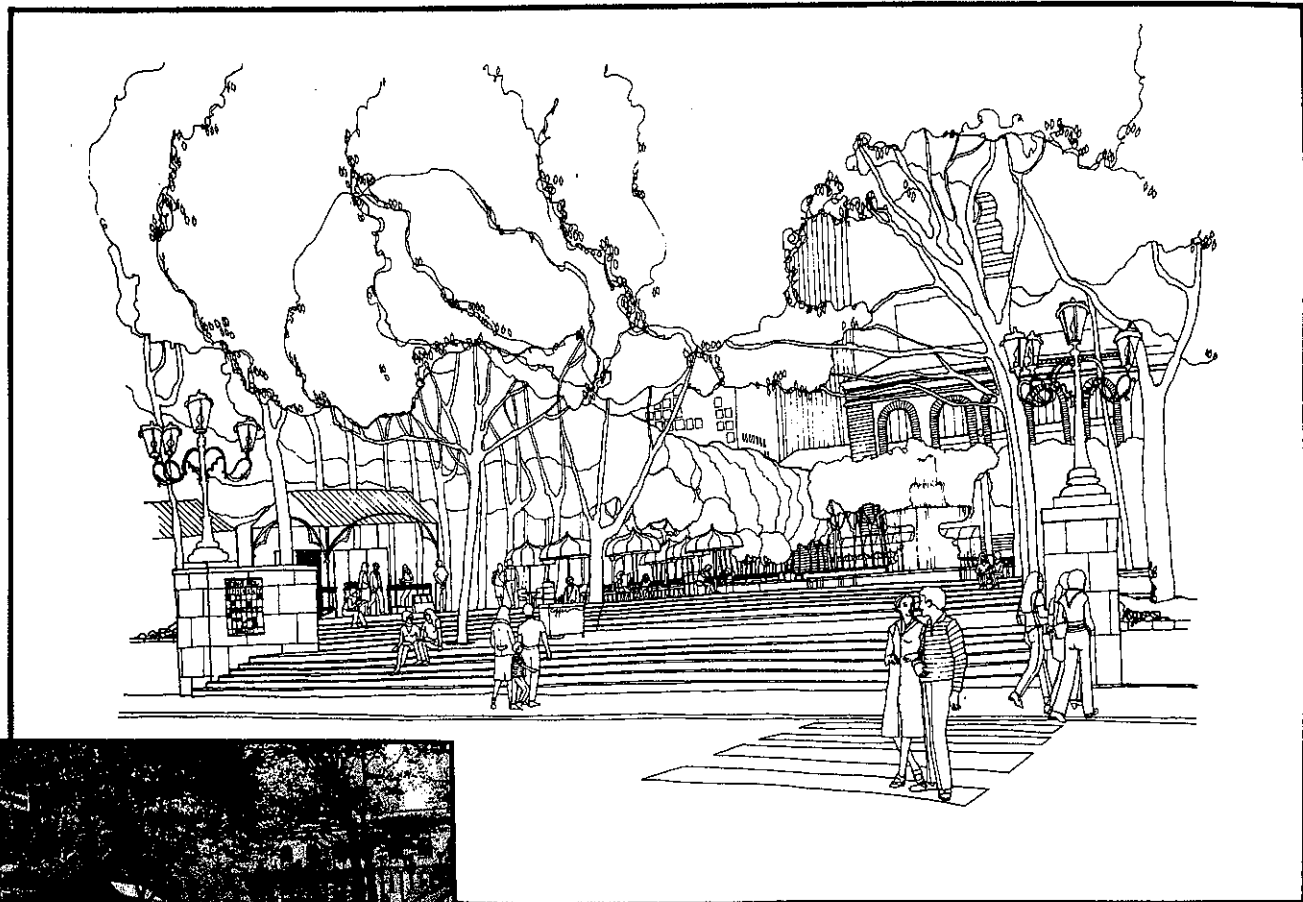
#### Objectives

- To redefine the plaza as a transition zone between the sidewalk and the Park.
- To provide a focus for the statue.
- To increase physical and visual accessibility into the Park.

#### Recommendations

- *Place the entire plaza transition area at sidewalk grade to accommodate short-cutting at the corner (Figure 13, Possible Access at the Avenue of the Americas Plaza).*
- *Relocate the statue into the center of the plaza on a smaller base. Visitors would be more aware of its presence if they moved around it as a free-standing monument.*





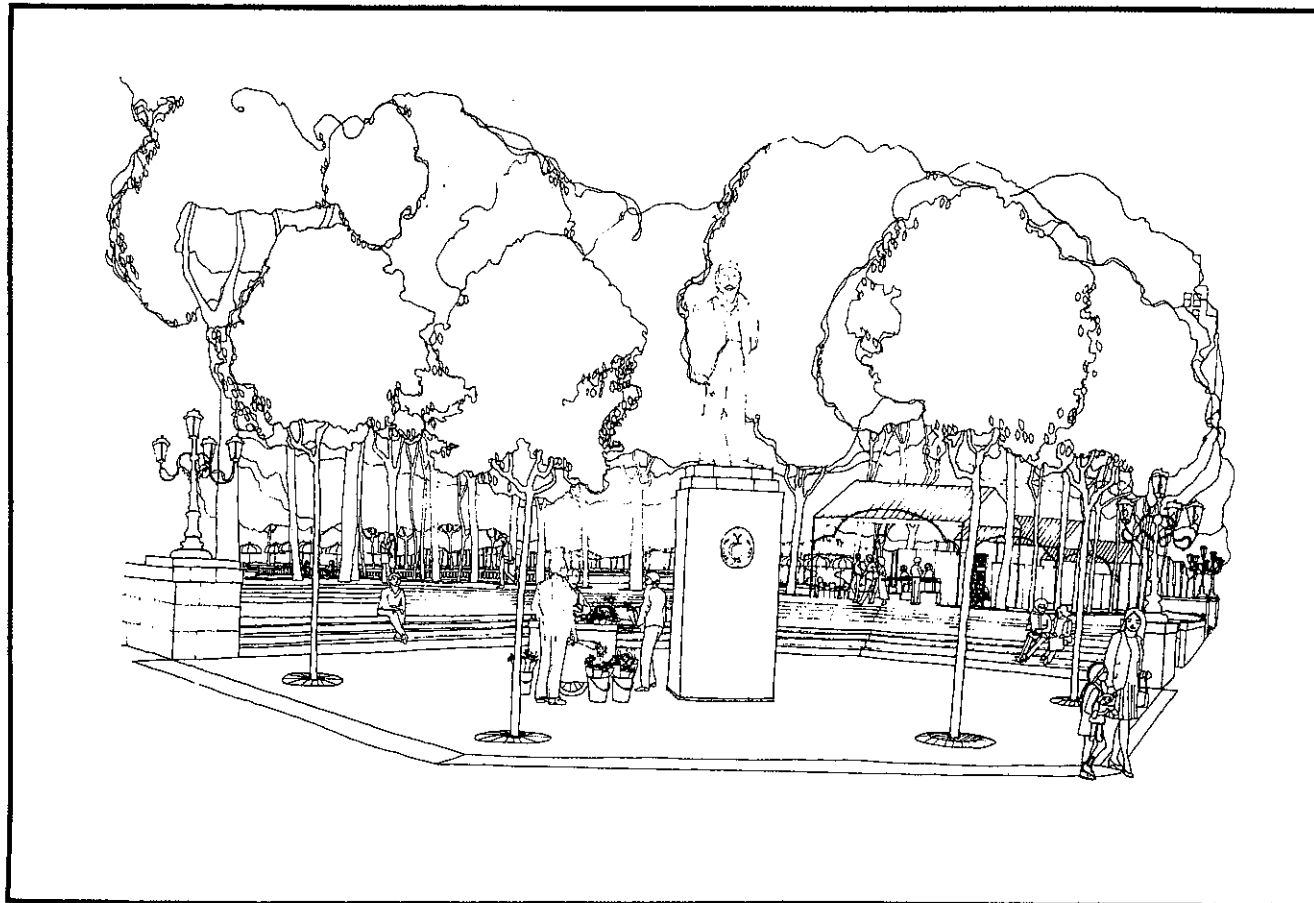
Proposed

Mid-block Entrance  
Avenue of the Americas

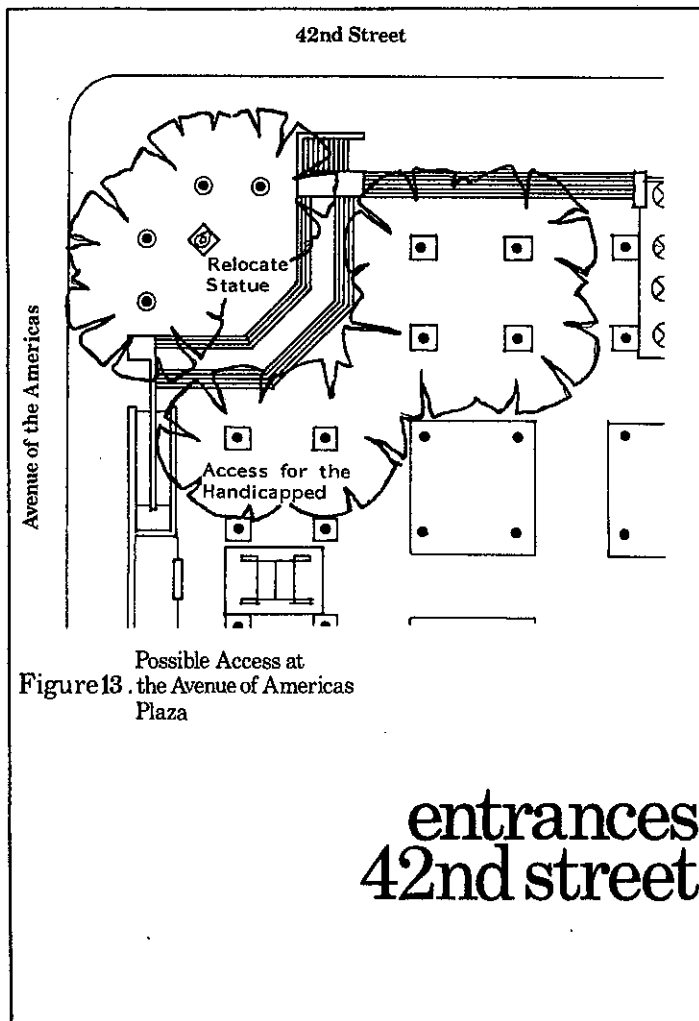


Existing

42nd Street Corner  
on Avenue of the Americas



Proposed



- Provide pushcart vending locations on the plaza rather than on the sidewalk, to ease congestion at the corner.
- Remove the base of the statue and the retaining walls, replacing them with a low-rise, double bank of steps. A continuous edge of steps will dramatically increase visual and physical accessibility into the Park. The plaza will function more as a transition zone, with the steps providing seating for people waiting.
- Provide handicapped access at the Avenue of the Americas side of the plaza.
- Plant large trees on the plaza to extend the park-like feeling out toward the sidewalks.

#### Objective

- To maximize physical access along 42nd Street from the Avenue of the Americas to the midblock entrance.

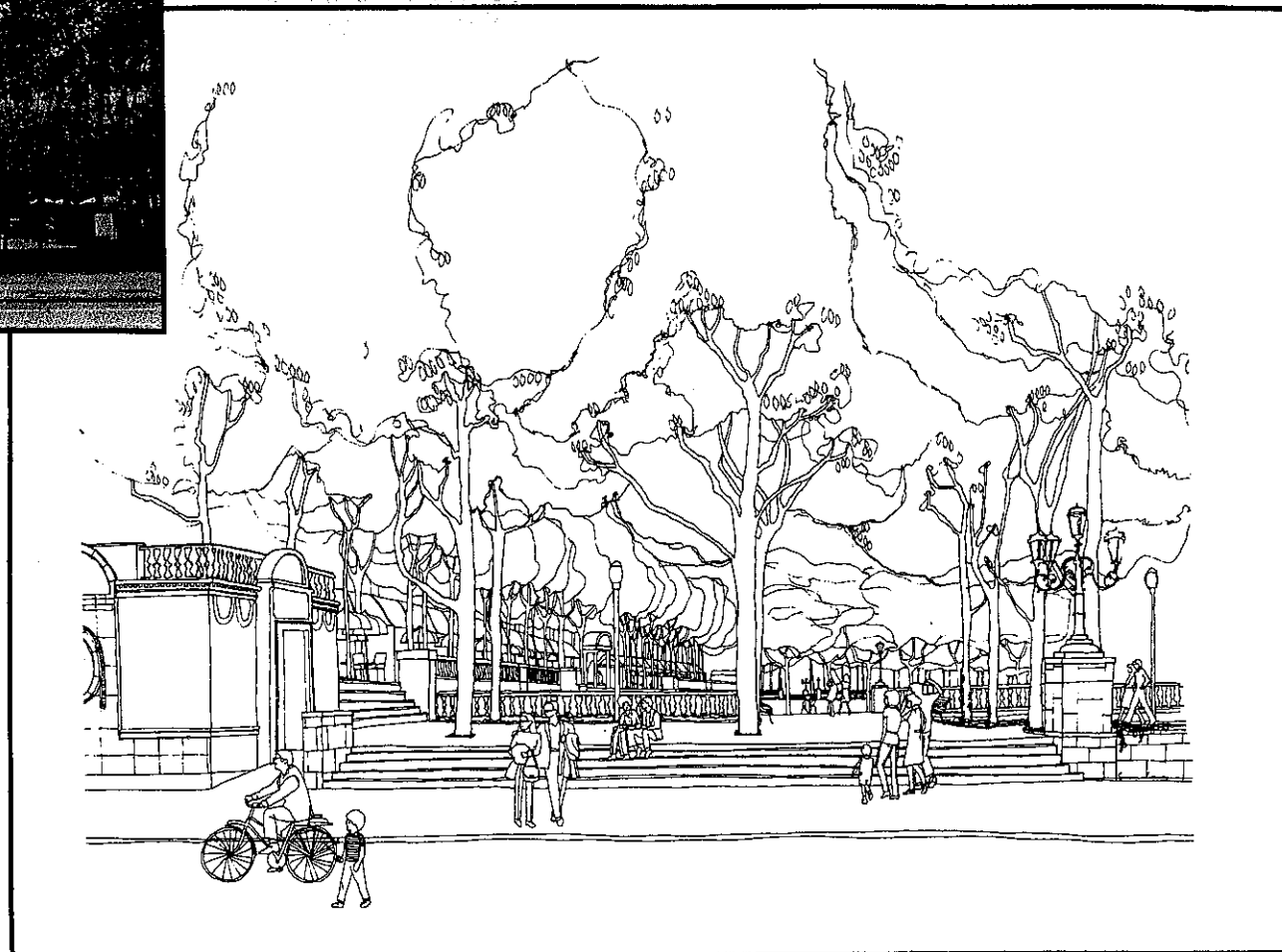
#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Relocate newsstands and telephone booths to curbside.
- Extend the 42nd Street entrance from its east side to the subway entrance.
- Provide a new entrance immediately east of the proposed 42nd Street Cafe. This entrance will increase exit options, and provide a flow of pedestrians around the Cafe.
- Rebuild the 42nd Street midblock entrance west of its present location.

Existing

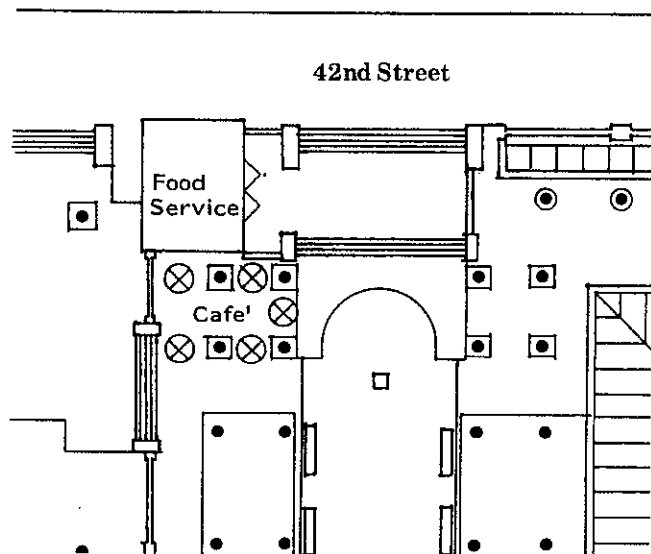


Mid-block Entrance on  
on 42nd Street



Proposed

# 42nd street upper terrace entrances



Proposed  
Figure 14 Upper Terrace Access  
at 42nd Street

# 42nd street library walkway

## Objective

- To encourage use of the entrance as a midblock walkway to 40th Street, and as access to the upper terrace activities.

## Recommendations

- Provide an intermediate landing between the sidewalk and upper terrace. The 3-foot 10-inch change in elevation would require eight steps from the street. The proposed configuration, with a wide entrance and low rise steps, would make the change appear less demanding. The landing would also provide a service area for the food concession proposed for the structure next to the terrace. (Figure 14)

## Objectives

- To increase the security of this upper level walkway.
- To increase pedestrian traffic from Fifth Avenue along the walkway.

## Recommendations

- Remove the planting areas from the elevated walkway.

library front  
terrace access

40th street  
entrances

- *Remove the bench (which now visually obstructs the walk from Fifth Avenue) and provide a wider walking surface from the building to the balustrade.*
- *Add shade trees along the walk to connect the front of the Library visually with Bryant Park.*
- *Provide handicapped access from the sidewalk to the walkway near the Library entrance.*

#### LIBRARY FRONT TERRACE ACCESS

##### Objectives

- *To increase the visibility of the front Library terrace.*
- *To increase its circulation along the terrace.*

##### Recommendations

- *Provide new stepped entrances to the front Library from 40th and 42nd Streets.*
- *Provide food service on the mid-terrace level at the 40th and 42nd Street end entrances.*
- *Relocate street vendors and telephones to curbside.*

##### Objectives

- *To provide access for handicapped persons*
- *To maintain a level of access compatible with the quieter activity on this side of the Park.*

##### Recommendations

- *Replace the two steps at the midblock entrance with a ramp.*
- *Monitor the 40th Street entrances to determine if the entrances continue to function without abuse. The monitoring should take into account changes in activity, visitor attendance, and visitor distribution in the Park.*

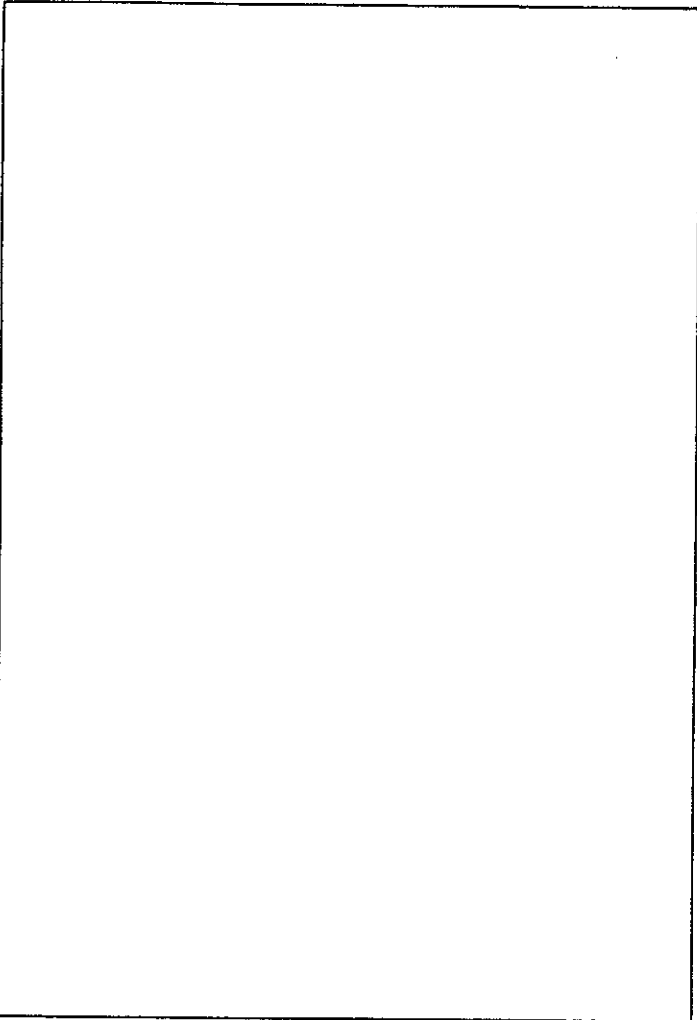
## internal circulation

Designs that encouraged diagonal circulation through the Park were rejected in 1934 because they would create pedestrian highways. As a result, short-cut circulation through the Park is circuitous. Only the western north-south path past the Lowell Fountain allows for direct passage through the Park. This limited choice of pathways for direct movement has contributed to the Park's unattractiveness in the early morning. For people on the way to work, many of whom walk north and east from the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the Park cannot be a destination, but it could be a pleasant event on their way.

The current design presents us with a grid of pathways under the allees and a ring promenade around the central lawn (Figure 12). The only access points to the lawn are from the upper terrace and the fountain plaza. As there are no visible exits from the long sides of the promenade, the overgrown five foot hedge along its edge has created an intimidating walk, and people avoid the promenade to walk through the center of the lawn. By mid-summer, the lawn shows the wear.

Restricted access to the street and to the lawn has turned the allees into virtual mazes. The few actual access points are not clearly identifiable. People often descend the terrace steps and turn directly right or left along the lawn promenade to what they believe to be a way through the Park. As they arrive at the balustrade, they realize there is no opening to the allee. Looking down the promenade with the hedge on one side and a balustrade on the other, they are unable to see an opening at the other end. They walk back up the terrace steps. At a time of danger, this confusion could be costly.

Construction of a pedestrian through route along the upper terrace will greatly alter the circulation patterns in the east end of the Park. More pedestrians will be able to use the Park as a short-cut — and a pleasurable walk. An increase in the number of people walking on the upper terrace will also lead to an increase in the number of visitors enter-



ing the lower Park from the terrace. If access points joining the lawn promenade to the allees are not added, the wear and tear on the worn central section of the lawn will be intensified.

Adjacent to the balustrade is another continuous walkway lined with benches on one side. During busy times, large numbers of people lean against or sit on the balustrade. The balustrade attracts a young population, and serves as a back-up location for marijuana sales in the Park. The interaction between people on the benches on one side of the walkway and people on the balustrades on the other can intimidate many Park users.

#### Objectives

- To increase the options for internal and through circulation.
- To discourage people from walking through the center of the lawn by encouraging use of the promenade around the lawn.
- To accommodate a more diverse population along the balustrades.

#### Recommendations

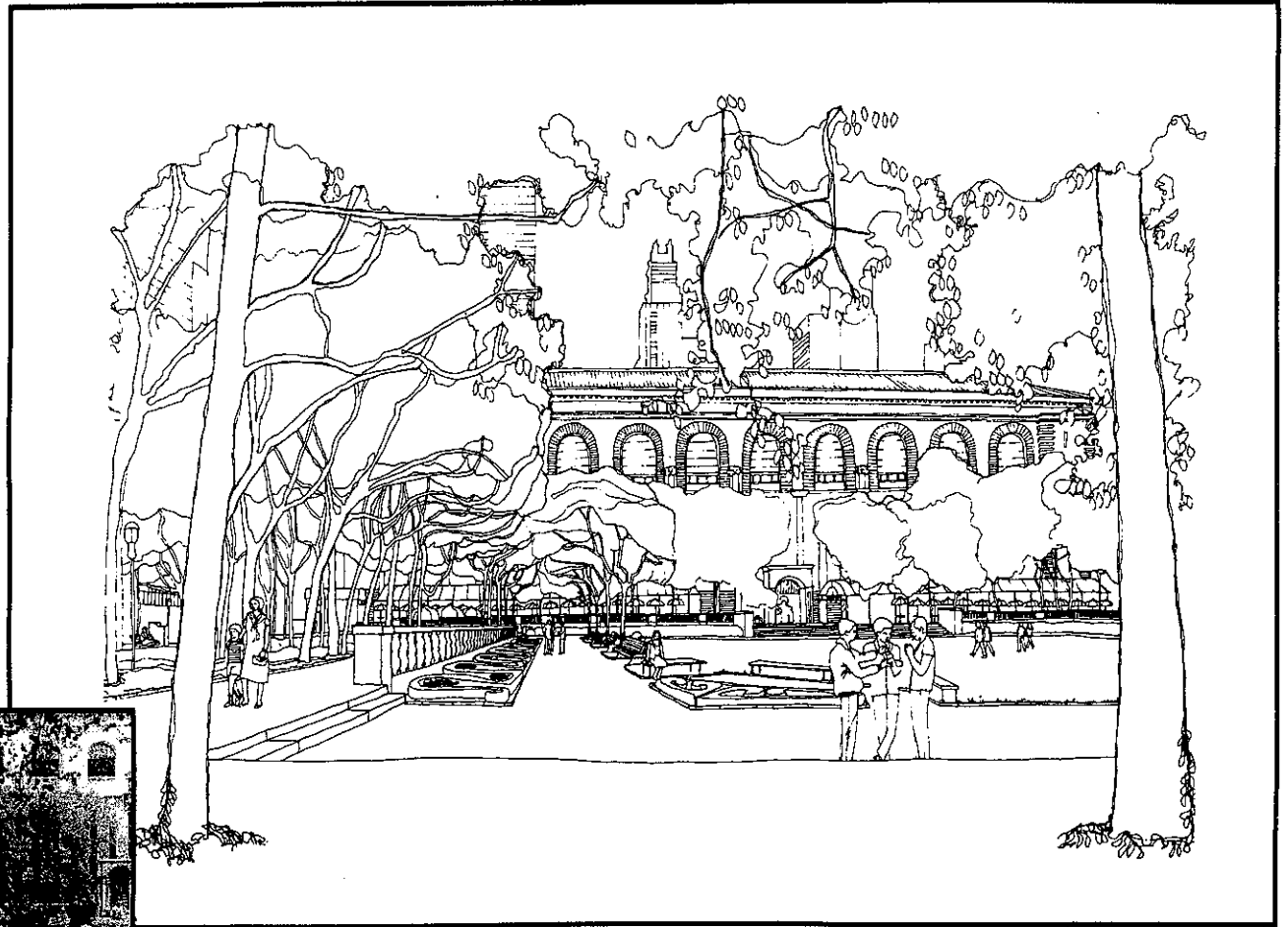
- *Open access to the lawn through the balustrade with new access points corresponding to pedestrian flow. These will connect with the existing allee grid to give the Park visitor more ways to approach the central lawn. The lawn would also be more visible from the street.*
- *Provide access points at the corners of the balustrade around the lawn to encourage the use of the promenade as the primary circulation route.*
- *Provide multiple access points from the promenade to the central lawn.*
- *Relocate the lunchtime entertainment area from the upper terrace to the foot of the terrace steps. This relocation will increase spectator seating. The mass of the audience and location of the performers will also discourage walking down the center of the lawn.*



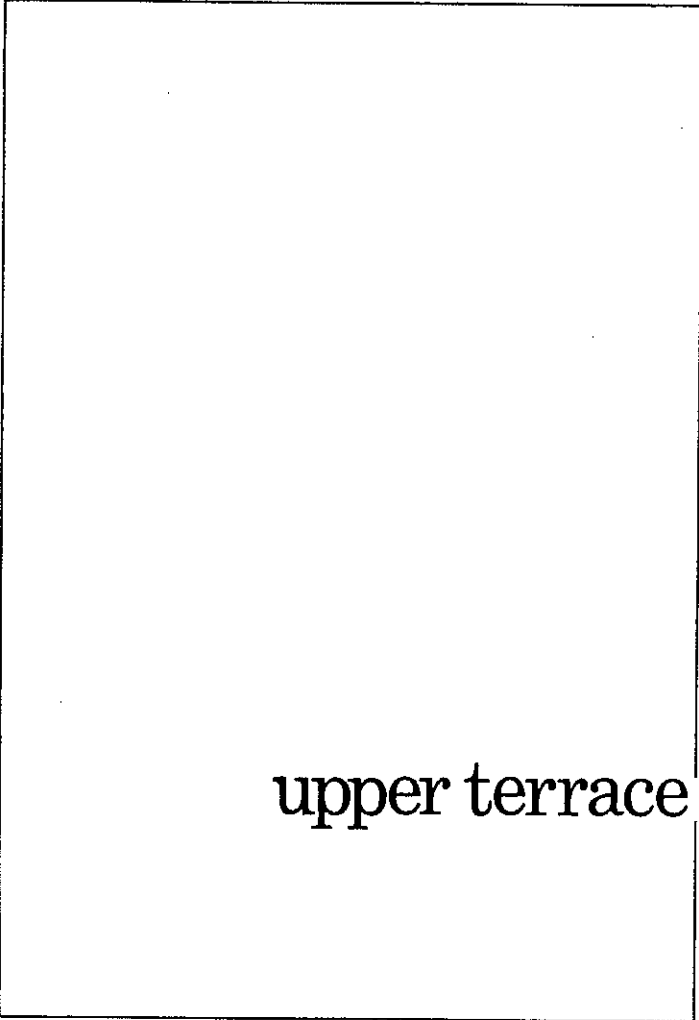
North Side of Main Lawn



Existing



Proposed



## upper terrace

- *Develop the central walk of the allees and its connection to the upper terrace as the outer circulation ring. Sculpture could be placed along the walk to focus strollers' attention on a sequence of points of interest. Water fountains, cafes, bookstalls, and seating alcoves should be accessible off the path.*
- *Provide an elevated seating area with tables and chairs on the middle section of the balustrade walks. The new seating would encourage a more diverse group to use the area.*
- *Provide access to the elevated seating area with a new entrance through the balustrade from the lawn, a path from the middle allee walk, and the existing balustrade walks.*
- *Cut the hedge on the lawn (from its current 5 feet to the original 2 feet) to allow for visibility of the walk from the lawn, and provide for access to the lawn.*
- *Restore the planting beds between the promenade and the balustrades with a colorful display of annuals and shrubs, to encourage visitors to walk along the promenade.*

The upper terrace attracts the most diverse users of any area in the park. Its visitors are well balanced in terms of gender and race; also, terrace visitors cover the widest age range in the Park. The many activities that support this population mix include chess-playing, strolling and noon hour concerts. A variety of seating options, such as the balustrade, the terrace steps to the lawn, and benches with backs, also encourages diversity. In addition, the upper terrace serves as a walkway between 40th Street and 42nd Street.

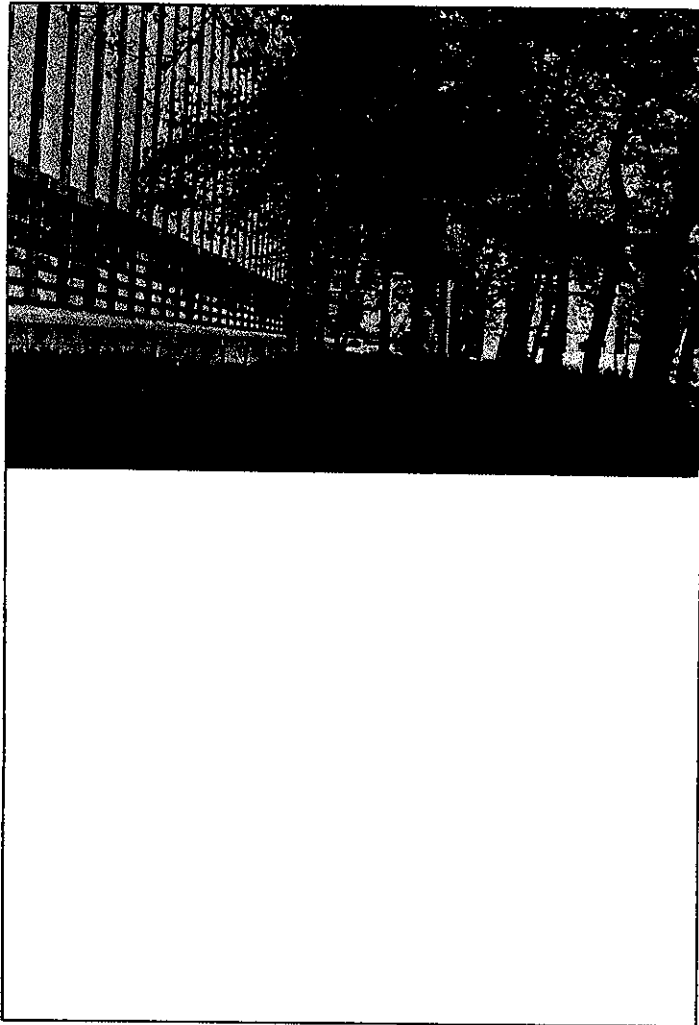


The upper terrace is considered a safe place to be during the lunch hour. The women we interviewed felt that it was one of the most secure places in the Park. The lunchtime concerts are well-attended and half the audience come specifically for that activity. There are very few indigents on the upper terrace during its peak use, and little marijuana dealing. The dealing that does occur is confined to a small area — the 42nd Street entrance to the upper terrace — and thus is easy to avoid.

However, before and after the lunch-time hours, park visitors view the upper terrace as the most dangerous area of the Park. People see the dark corners near the Library (especially at 42nd Street, with its lack of visibility from the street and lack of an "escape route") as especially dangerous. This perception is confirmed by the amount of crime that actually occurs there.

In order to turn the upper terrace into a busy (and safe) walkway, the New York City Parks Department has proposed a capital project that would allow direct access to the terrace from the street. Directly behind the Library is a large unused area, bordered by a hedgerow and filled in with ferns, which abuts the new pedestrian route. Potentially useful to the Park, these areas are currently used as an open-air urinal.

As one of the marijuana-dealing control strategies tried by the Parks Department in the spring of 1980, the walkway along the 42nd Street side of the Library (leading to the upper terrace) was fenced off. These fences actually reduced security. People who did not know that the walkway was no longer open found themselves at a dead end — a most uncomfortable and insecure feeling. During lunch hours, when many people enter Bryant Park from the Library or Fifth Avenue, they were annoyed to discover that they must climb over a series of snow fences.



The lunchtime concerts focus on the statue of William Cullen Bryant. The area is roped off, the performers set up, and a crowd gathers. This present location would block the proposed pedestrian walkway between 40th and 42nd Streets. It also has a limited seating capacity: there are only a few steps where people can sit and watch the performers.

Chess-playing — a major activity at the 42nd Street side of the terrace — attracts spectators as well as players. But at the moment, there are no chess tables and no accommodations for the spectators.

#### Objectives

- To increase the safety of the upper terrace, especially in "off hours."
- To diversify the activities along the upper terrace.
- To occupy underutilized areas, reclaiming them from improper uses.
- To restore damaged landscapes.

#### Recommendations

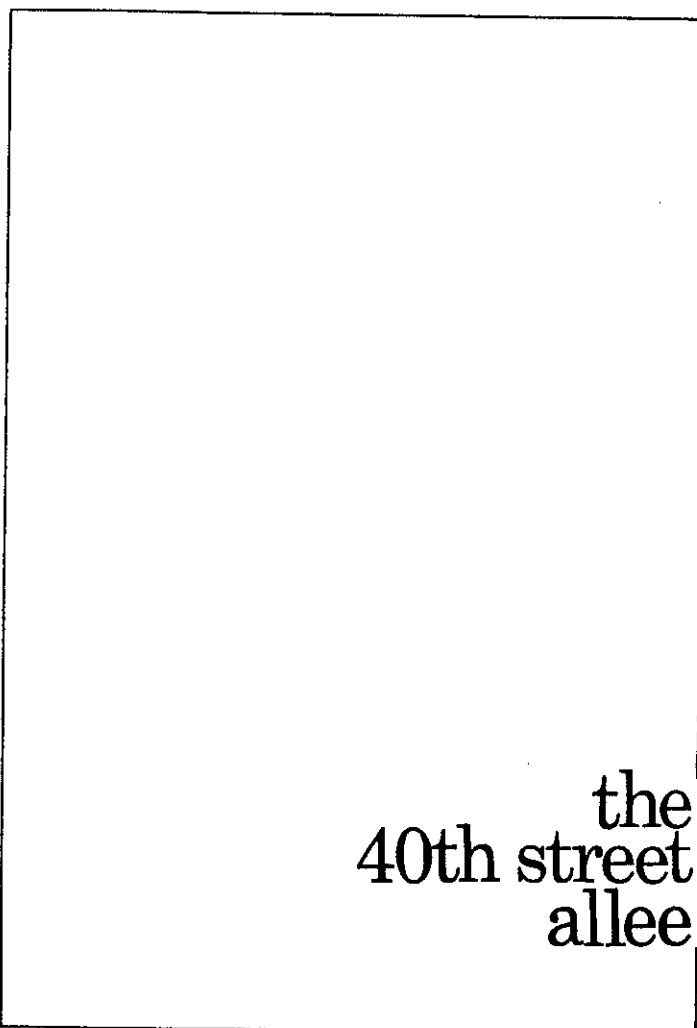
- *Recycle the structure at the north end of the terrace into a full service food concession. Located at the entrance to the new upper terrace walkway, the concession will increase activity at the entrance and provide a proprietary interest in its security. With a concession window at a level half-way up the steps from 42nd Street, the concession will be visible from the street, and bring more people into the Park.*
- *Provide a small area for tables and chairs adjacent to the concession, to be maintained by its staff.*
- *Develop the northern portion of the unused area immediately behind the Library into a year-round public pavilion. The pavilion could house book sales, a Library book store, a game room, a conservatory, or a restaurant. The new use should aim to increase pedestrian volumes, extend the hours of use, and encourage sitting along the walkway.*

Existing



Upper Terrace  
Facing 42nd Street

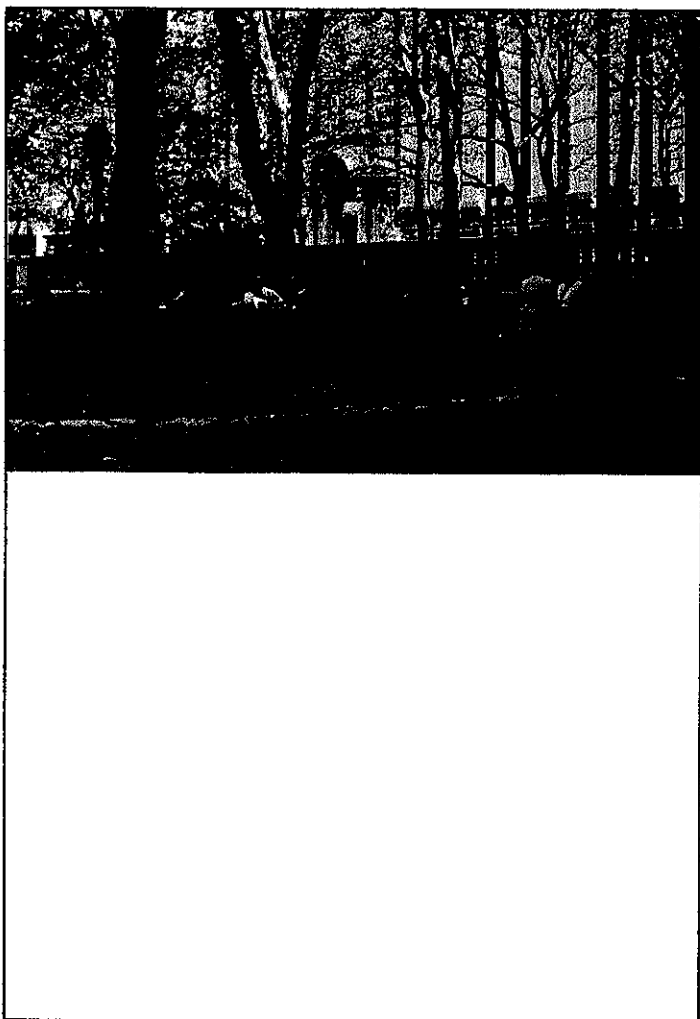
Proposed



## the 40th street allee

- *Extend the uses that occupy the pavilion out into the area around the sides and back of the Bryant statue during fair weather.*
- *Develop a restaurant in the unused area behind the Library, south of the Bryant statue. The restaurant should provide quality service and be a destination in itself for midtown workers and visitors. Customer access and servicing could be accommodated easily from 40th Street. The restaurant should provide an outdoor patio for dining during summer. The facility should have evening hours, which would assure the evening security of the walkway all year long, and probably diminish vandalism in the Park.*
- *Relocate the focus of entertainment programs to the lawn at the base of the steps to the upper terrace. The wide flight of ten steps will provide increased seating for concert watchers, and prevent the obstruction of the new midblock walkway on the terrace.*
- *Rehabilitate the remaining planting areas and park furniture.*

The 40th Street side of the Park is predominantly a male domain. The walkway along the balustrade is occupied by the youngest male population in the Park, who hang out together, smoke marijuana, and play their radios. The flat benches in the middle walkway accommodate a middle-aged crowd, and elderly gentlemen sit and read along the 40th Street side of the Park on the benches with backs. The social atmosphere in this part of the Park is pleasant and relaxing. Because of the comfortable benches, it is the one area where visitors come for long-term reading.



Behind a hedge in the southwest corner of the Park, indigents congregate at lunchtime. This seems to be their area of the Park, where the public is least offended by their presence. The area is not on a major walkway, and is hidden from most visitors' view.

The 40th Street allee has a healthy use throughout the day, starting in the early morning, when people come in to read newspapers, have coffee, and talk. The present seating arrangement, however, inhibits extended social gathering and most of the people here are alone or in pairs.

At the east end of the allee, just below the upper terrace, is a crude picnic area – barren, hard-packed soil set with wooden picnic benches. Prior to the opening of the Bryant Park Cafe, this was the only seating with tables in the entire Park. The tables are heavily used at lunch-time by men and women of all ages. Adjacent to the picnic area is the maintenance yard for an entire Parks Department district – a crude compound with slat fences to block the view of the debris within the yard. This facility occupies a very prominent spot on the 40th Street side of the Park.

But the overall image of the 40th Street allee is one of tranquility, a peaceful haven away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Here the ivy beds and trees have suffered least. This side of the Park is open to possible abuse, as other parts of the Park become more active and safe. Some program and design changes in this area will be necessary to prevent it from inheriting all the problems of the newly refurbished portions of Bryant Park.

The building which houses the Park's maintenance office was originally designed for washrooms. The similar structure on 42nd Street served the same purpose. Crime, abuse and vandalism have led to their recycling into other uses. Not having washroom facilities has led to the use of the shrub areas as a substitute.



### Objectives

- To use a portion of the existing maintenance area, and the structure at the corner of 40th Street and Avenue of the Americas, for activities that draw visitors into the Park.
- To increase the amount of seating, and the seating options, in the area.
- To provide a sequence of events along the central walk that will reinforce its role as the major circulation path in the allee.

### Recommendations

- *Set additional seating in alcoves off the walkways. The new seating will eliminate the "gauntlet" feeling that makes some visitors uncomfortable on Park paths, and accommodate group conversations.*
- *Provide an elevated terrace along the balustrade, with tables and chairs overlooking the central lawn.*
- *Provide access to the elevated seating area from the central walk of the allee, from the lawn, and along the balustrade.*
- *Provide settings for sculpture along the central walk of the allee. The sculptures would become a sequence of points of interest.*
- *Re-landscape the area adjacent to the Avenue of the Americas side of the allee. The landscape treatment should lower the walkways to the top level of the retaining wall, with benches re-oriented to face the street. This change in landscaping should reinforce the visual connection between the Park and the sidewalk.*  
*Rehabilitate planting beds within the allee, replacing all tall or ragged shrubs.*  
*Recycle the service building at the corner of 40th Street and the Avenue of the Americas into a food concession. The concession would open out only onto 40th Street, to prevent congestion from developing on the Avenue sidewalk.*
- *Provide for an artist-in-residence program at the current location of the Park's maintenance*



## fountain plaza

yard. Each year a new artist would be selected to build a work of art for the Park. The work would be developed and built on site encouraging the artist to interact with Park visitors. The area should include a public work yard, a small work room, and an area for equipment storage.

- Replace the picnic area with new landscaping.
- Provide public toilets adjacent to the corner of 40th Street and the Avenue of the Americas. The facility should provide for the following: a self-contained unit including toilet and wash basin; a door opening so that there are no hidden places; a size that will accommodate only one person; a material that is not easily vandalized and easily cleaned; a location in public view so that people approaching the facility can see if there is anyone lurking about; a facility accessible both from the Park and the street.

The fountain plaza is the focus of the west end of Bryant Park. But the lip of the fountain provides the only seating on the plaza. This large area has the lowest attendance of any part of the Park. The installation of the Parks Council's bookstalls to the north of the fountain has increased the visitor activity here but — other than one pushcart vendor often located between the fountain and the lawn during lunch and the afternoon — there are no facilities that would accommodate people who might linger on the plaza. Afternoon



entertainment on the plaza has been successful in drawing additional visitors into the Park during performances.

Both these programs attract visitors to the plaza area, but as soon as the entertainment finishes or the bookstalls close, the plaza reverts to a dormant state. However, the proposed restoration of the fountain by the Parks Council will create a demand for additional seating around the fountain.

The plaza is an important circulation area, and a shortcut between 40th and 42nd Street. This pedestrian activity and low visitor use has allowed the plaza to become a secondary marijuana marketplace. Dealers either sit on the fountain rim or patrol the area.

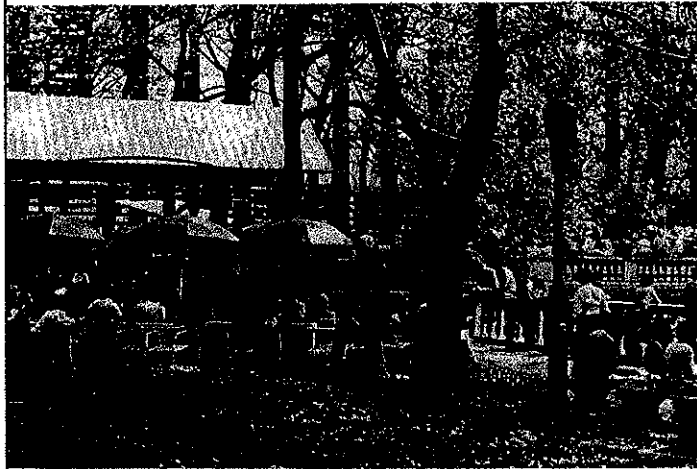
#### Objectives

- To increase visitor use of the fountain plaza.
- To provide for circulation through the plaza.

#### Recommendations

- *Provide tables and chairs along the north, south, and east sides of the plaza.*
- *Relocate and expand the bookstall activity to focus attention on underutilized sections of the adjoining allee (see Bookstalls).*
- *Establish food vendors in the forecourt of the plaza. These should provide early morning coffee as well as lunchtime and afternoon service.*
- *Design a dramatic water display for the fountain. The volume of water splashing from the upper container should create a white noise that will reduce the intrusion of city noises into the plaza. Consideration should be given to altering the fountain design slightly in order to allow water to run over its rim into a ground level pool around the base of the fountain. This would increase the effect of water in the plaza.*

## 42nd street allee

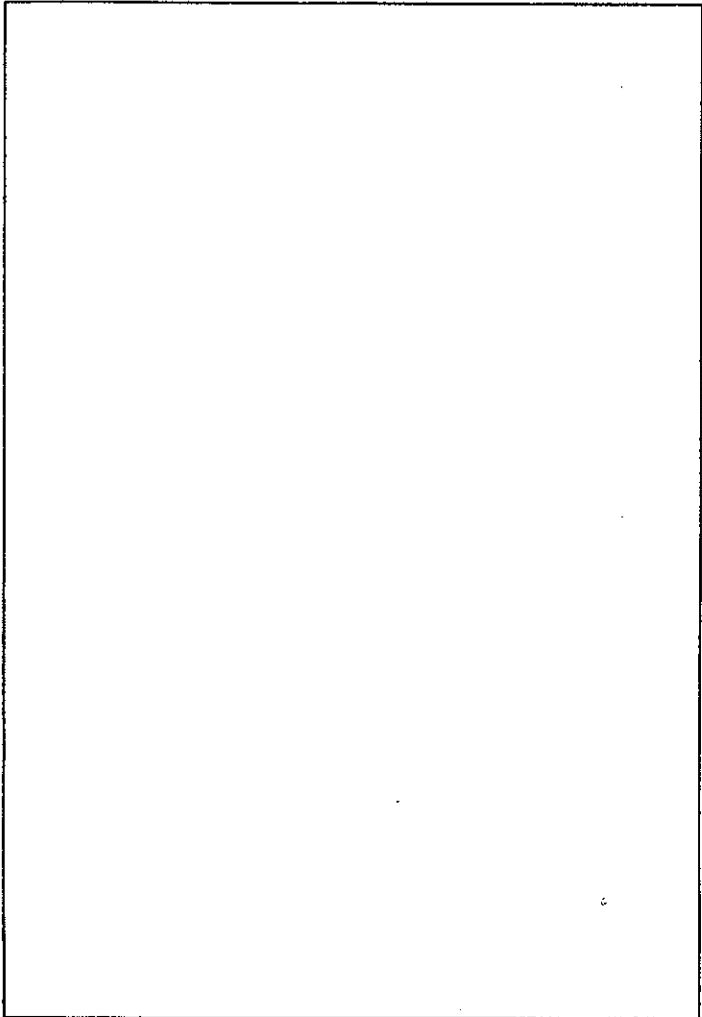


The 42nd Street allee is the area north of the fountain plaza stretching east along 42nd Street to the upper terrace. Most visitors enter Bryant Park by the three entrances along this area's northern edge. The importance of these entries is reflected in the concentration and intensity of marijuana dealing along the walkways. This is the area described by some park visitors as the "gauntlet."

The 42nd Street allee exhibits the highest level of energy and movement in the Park. People filter through it into other areas, dealers work the incoming population, and the seating areas serve as meeting places throughout the day. The walkway along the balustrade is the most used, and has the youngest population in the Park. There is a festive atmosphere along this edge. The central allee is primarily a circulation path between the Avenue of the Americas and the east end of the Park. On hot summer days, benches along the path are filled to capacity, some with as many as nine people.

The three walks parallel to the Avenue of the Americas each have a different character. The walk immediately next to the outer edge of the Park is rarely used: indigents tend to congregate there. The central path leading from the Avenue of the Americas plaza to the bookstalls is in transition. The bookstalls have increased use of the pathway, but have not focused enough attention on it to lead to a dramatic change in character. The path next to the balustrade has the highest pedestrian volumes of the three routes, because it is both an entrance to other areas of the Park and a part of the short-cut between 40th and 42nd Streets. This path is also the most visible one from 42nd Street, and is the heart of the marijuana marketplace in Bryant Park.

The entrances from the corner of the Avenue of the Americas and 42nd Street lead to the most damaged landscape in the Park. Ivy beds have been trampled, shrubs removed without other plant material replacing them, and benches left unrepaired. The image pre-



sented to potential visitors entering the Park is one of neglect. The presence of indigents and marijuana dealers, and the grimy appearance of the Avenue of the Americas plaza, all reinforce this impression.

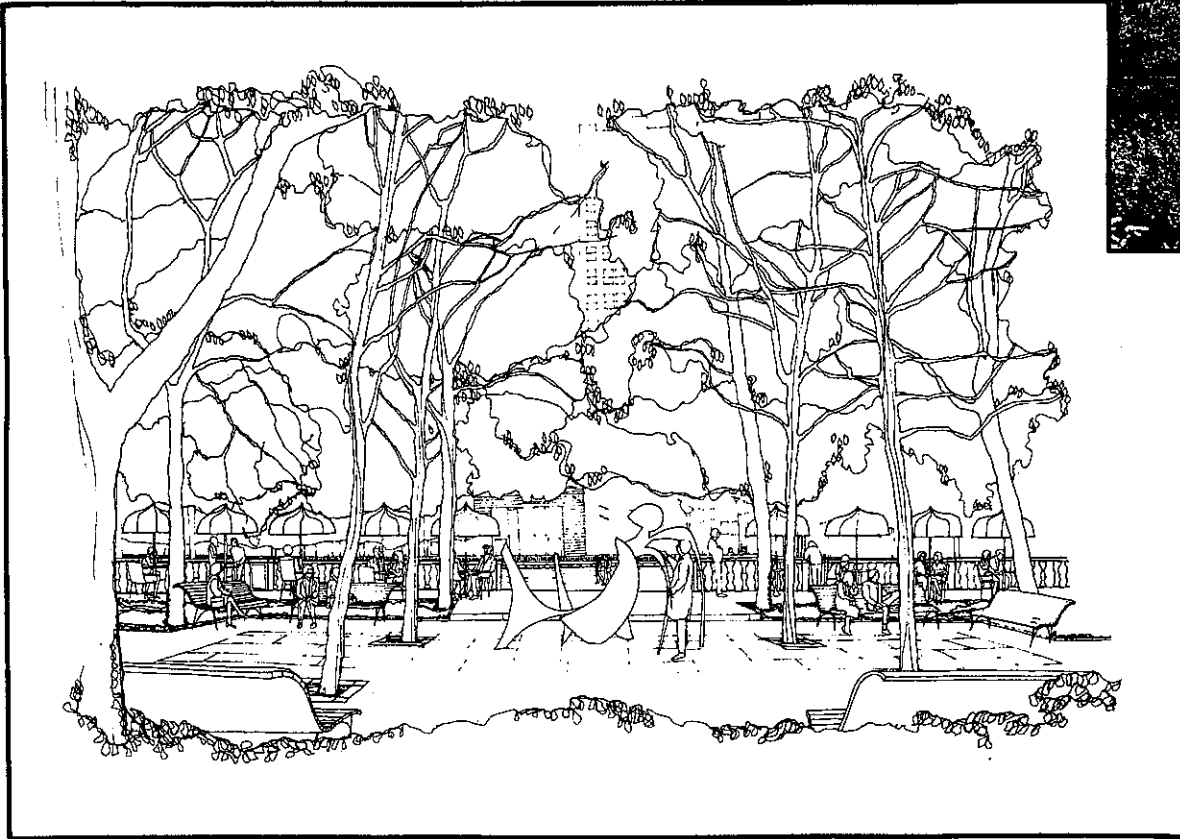
The Bryant Park Café was installed this summer at the east end of the 42nd Street alley. While its seating area was congested, it was popular for lunchtime use. The single vendor at its edge helped extend use of the café into the afternoon.

#### Objectives

- To provide new amenities that will secure the northwest corner of the Park for safe and comfortable visitor use.
- To increase seating.
- To restore damaged landscapes.

#### Recommendations

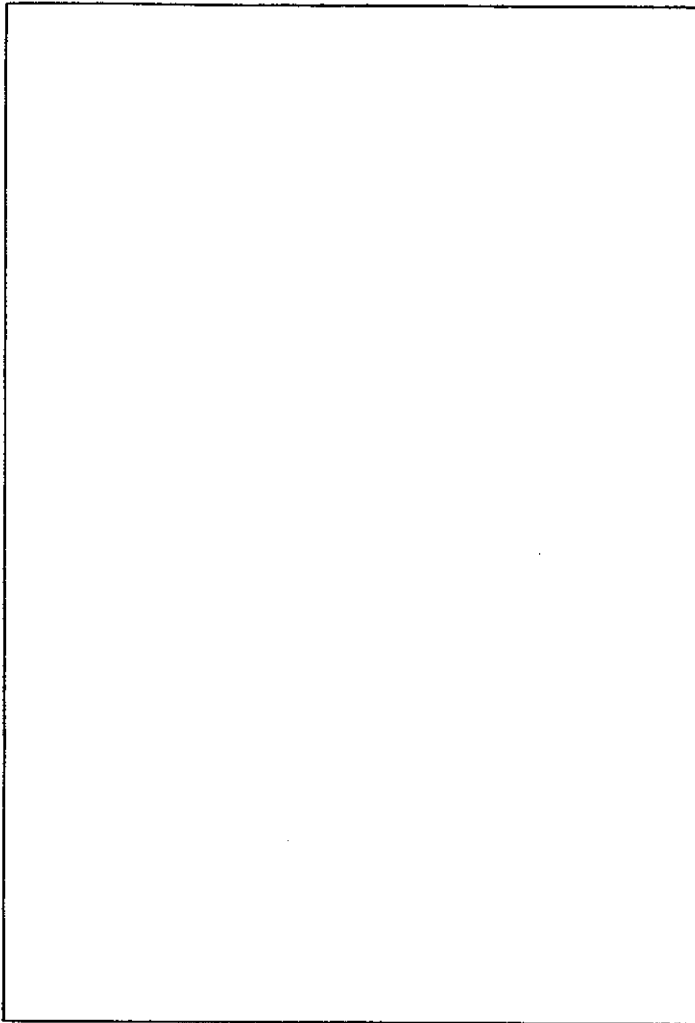
- *Redefine the entrance area in the northwest corner of the Park to provide increased visual and physical access (rendering on page 49.)*
- *Re-landscape the pathway adjacent to the Avenue of the Americas to lower the Park grade to the top of the retaining wall.*
- *Focus bookstall activity on the central path leading to the Lowell Fountain. This activity should be highly visible from the northwest entrances of the Park.*
- *Provide new seating areas adjacent to the bookstalls, but not in hidden areas.*
- *Remove all benches from the walk leading from 42nd Street to the Lowell Fountain.*
- *Remove the balustrade along the 42nd Street-Lowell Fountain path. This will eliminate a comfortable post for marijuana dealers, and will allow easy access onto the lawn. (Dealers find it difficult to operate in an area that is as open as this would be --note the lack of dealing at the steps between the lawn and the Lowell Fountain.)*



Existing

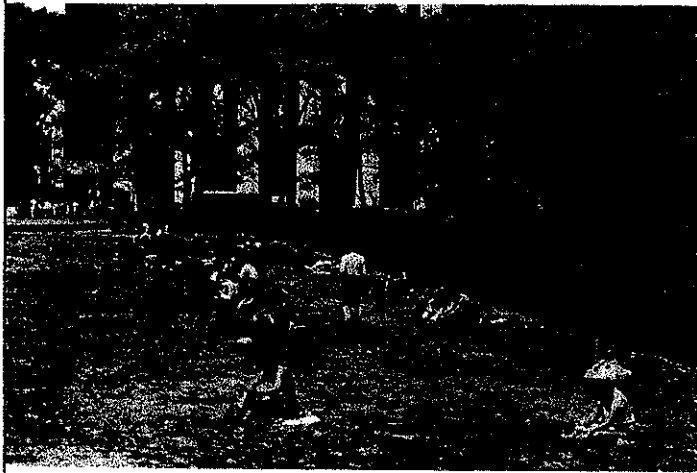
Allee along 40th Street

Proposed



- *Provide a year-round cafe at the 42nd Street entrance to link the activity of the sidewalk to the Park. The cafe should have outdoor seating on all sides.*
- *Provide an elevated seating area midway along the east-west walk, adjacent to the balustrade, to accommodate people sitting at table overlooking the central lawn. This seating area should be accessible through an opening in the balustrade from the central lawn, and from the walks adjacent to the balustrade.*
- *Provide seating alcoves along the balustrade walk and central allee walk to increase seating, and accommodate group gatherings.*
- *Provide sculpture settings along the central allee as a focus for the central allee walk.*
- *Relocate the Bryant Park Cafe to an area where it would be serviced by a permanent food concession. The installation of the cafe near the proposed upper terrace entrance off 42nd Street would secure the new entrance, and allow for service to the cafe from the concession building.*
- *Restore the landscape throughout all areas of the allee, eliminating any remaining tall shrubs that have become visual barriers.*

## central lawn



The central lawn is the heart of the Bryant Park sanctuary — two acres of grass slightly lower than the surrounding tree-lined allees. Around it is a flagstone walk bordered generally by a balustrade on the outer side and a formal hedge on the lawn side. The hedge, once a low design element intended to unify the Park, occupies a third of the total lawn area, and has matured to a height of five feet. This hedge and the lack of visible access points give Park users who approach the promenade a feeling of insecurity, causing most people to avoid it.

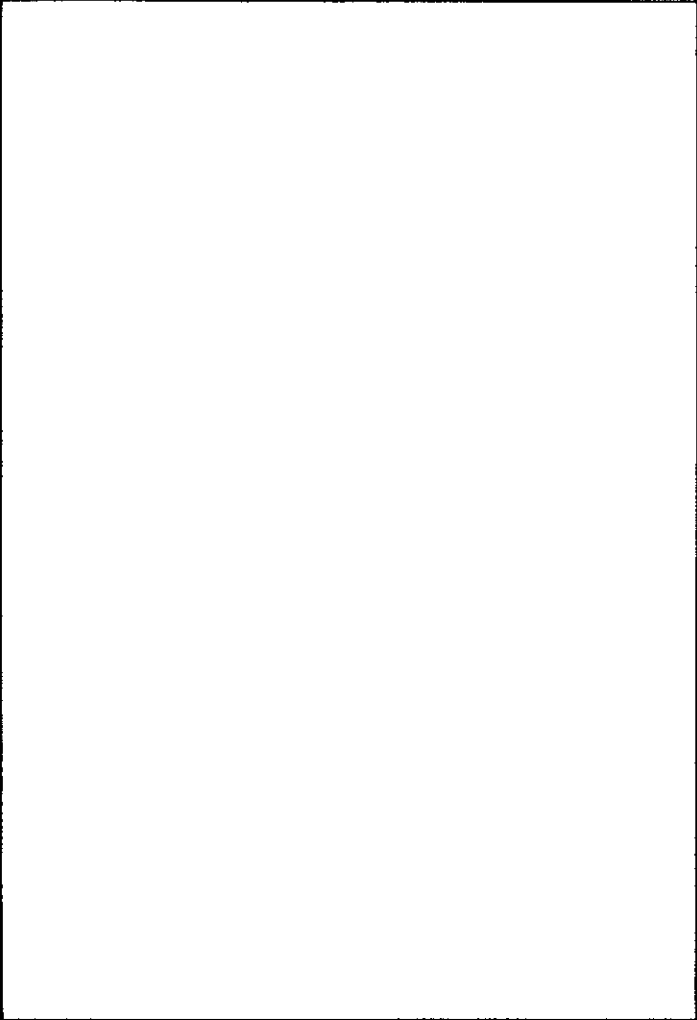
The lawn is heavily used in late spring, early summer, and fall by people picnicking, talking, sunning, and reading. Lunchtime frisbee playing and late afternoon soccer in the center lawn provide an activity for the lawn-sitters to watch. In the early morning and late afternoon, when there are fewer people on the lawn, the indigent population stretches out to relax and sleep. Indigents are more noticeable at these times of day both because there are more of them and fewer other people around. During peak use between noon and 2 PM, the lawn becomes a haven for a predominantly white, 18-35 year-old population. There tend to be slightly more people on the sunny north side of the lawn. This is the second most popular area for women in the Park (23%), demonstrating the feeling of security and companionship that women are able to find here.

During hot August days, when the grass dries out and a dust path forms from the constant movement of people through the center of the lawn, use of the lawn drops dramatically.

### Objectives

The lawn has the capacity to draw large numbers of people and still maintain its oasis-like atmosphere. The specific objectives for the lawn are:

- To increase seating options.

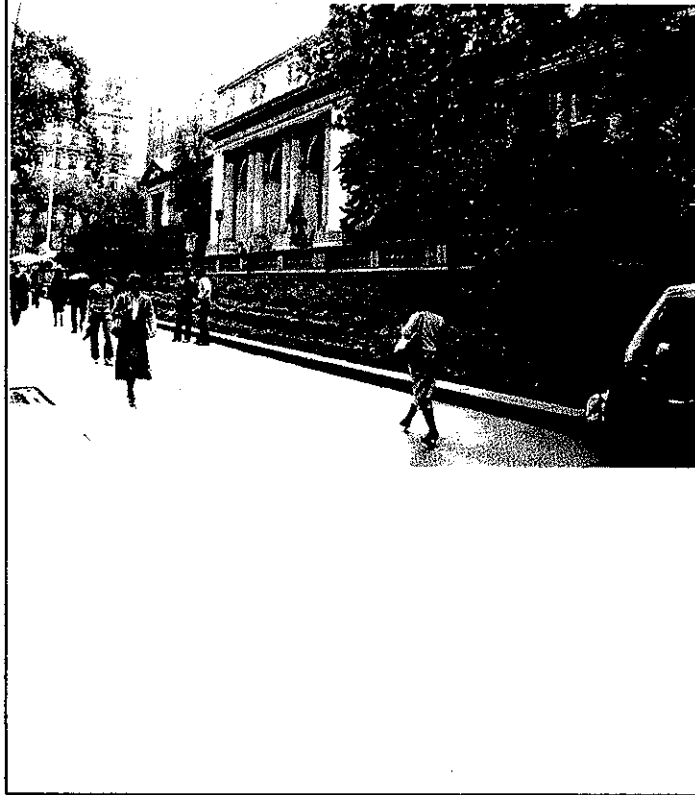
- 
- To maintain the visual unity of the lawn.
  - To increase the use of the lawn on hot days.
  - To develop a circulation system that discourages circulation down the center of the lawn.

#### Recommendations

- *Provide multiple access points on the north and south sides of the lawn to allow freer movement between the allees and the lawn. Provide these access points so that they coincide with sight lines from the streets, to increase the awareness of the lawn among people passing by Bryant Park.*
- *Plant shade trees on the sides of the lawn and benches adjacent to it, to encourage use by a more diverse visitor population.*
- *Relocate noon entertainment from the upper terrace to a location at the foot of the terrace steps. The terrace steps will quadruple the spectator capacity for concerts. The lawn will provide an alternative spectator seating area. The location of concerts at the mid-point of the east end will encourage sitting along the east end and discourage concentrated east-west pedestrian movement down the middle of the lawn.*
- *Develop a program to maintain the health and resiliency of the turf.*



# front terrace of the library



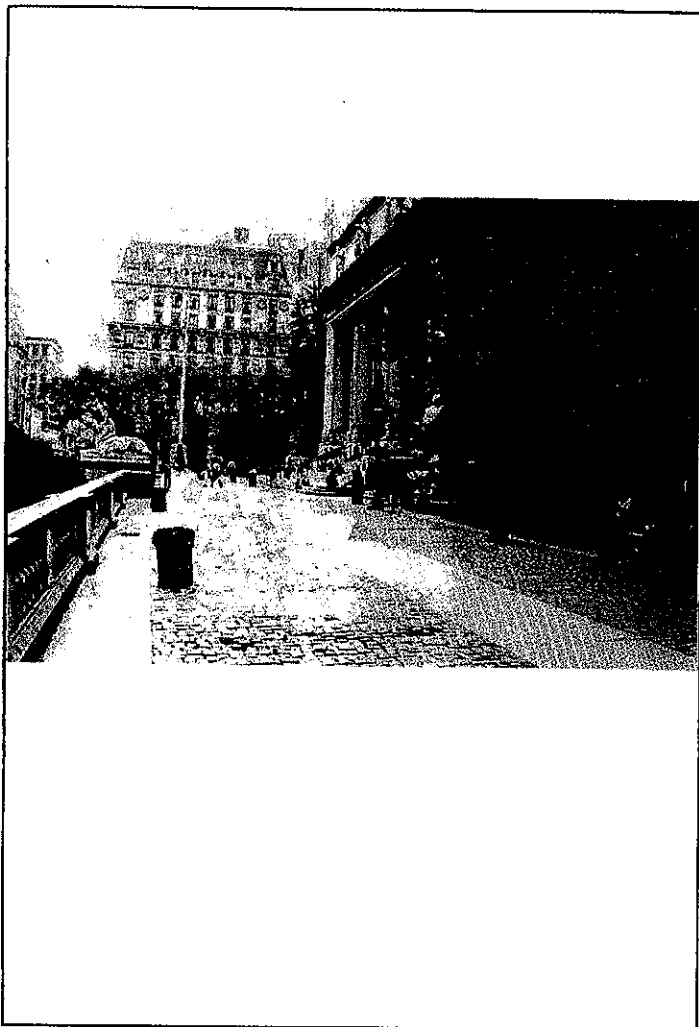
The front terrace of the New York Public Library is an under-utilized resource, elevated above Fifth Avenue and hidden behind the balustrade that runs its length. The front Library steps and the seating, sunning, meeting, lunching, people watching and entertainment activities that the steps support create one of the most popular Midtown public spaces, and yet the two terraces that flank the steps are devoid of legitimate activity.

Access to the upper terrace is gained from two, 20-foot wide entrances off Fifth Avenue near 40th and 42nd Street, or from the central Library steps. The two side entrances are often blocked by vendors at 40th Street and by active marijuana dealing at 42nd Street. In fact, the main activity on the north terrace is marijuana dealing. As described in Appendix A, dealers have been able to claim this space as their own, and to maintain control even under constant police surveillance.

There is no dealing activity on the south terrace, which is a quieter place. Both terrace areas lack any amenities that would increase their use. On warm sunny days, lunchtime users fill the few benches on the terraces, sit or stand along the balustrades, and sit around the flag poles, even in the midst of active marijuana dealing. But the spaces are generally empty.

The back half of the terrace contains unmaintained planting beds and large boxes for the Library's little-used floodlights. The plantings no longer complement the Library or provide shade. The light housings, some of which have been refurbished, provide hiding places for dealers to store marijuana. These areas are used as urinals and as places to make marijuana sales out of public view.

The two fountains flanking the main entrance to the New York Public Library have been restored to working order. Their location is somewhat obscure — at the back of the



terraces, almost out of view of most of the people using the Library entrance. The fountains, like the Lowell Memorial Fountain near the Avenue of the Americas entrance to Bryant Park, were designed at a time when water falling from dish to dish could be heard. The present level of noise from buses and automobile traffic overpowers them.

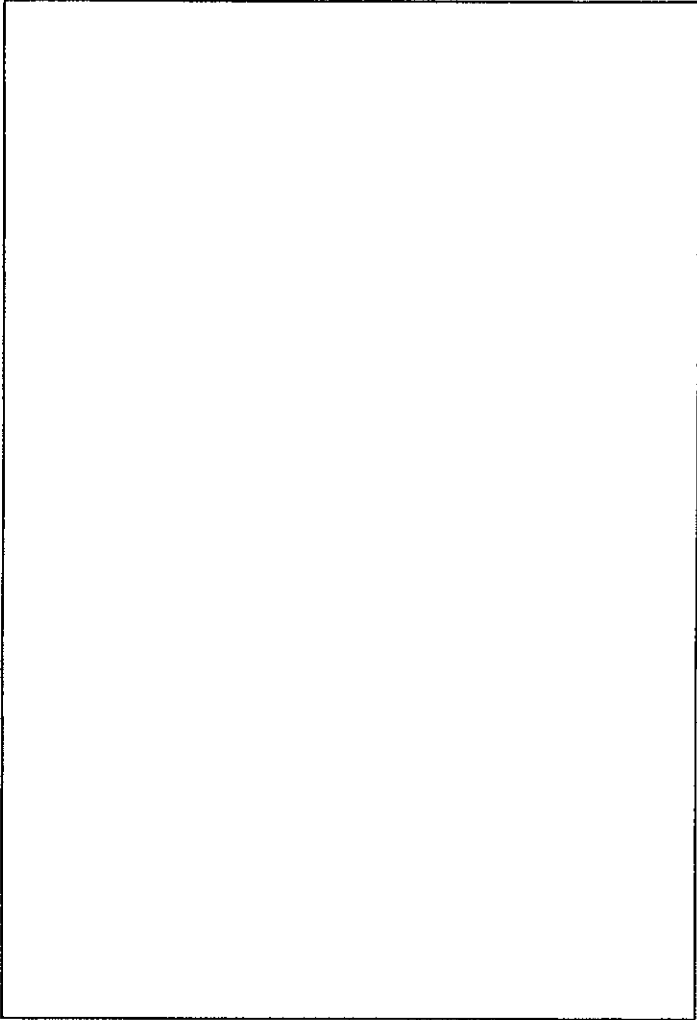
The terrace has the capacity to accommodate greatly increased visitor use. The healthy mix of visitors on the front Library steps could be encouraged to use the terrace area by new amenities. Two new proposed access points leading to the upper terrace at 40th and 42nd Streets will permit a direct view onto the terrace from the sidewalks, and encourage more pedestrians to use them.

#### Objectives

- To enhance the attractiveness of the terrace as a place for people-watching, lunching, reading, meeting, and relaxing.

#### Recommendations

- *Re-landscape the planting areas of the terrace to provide an appropriate setting for new seating, displays, and food service. The landscaping should have seasonal color, a variety of plant materials, and an attractiveness similar to show gardens.*
- *Re-design the lighting for the Library facade to allow the removal of the light boxes.*
- *Increase the water flow through the fountains, and explore the possibility of modifying the lower pool to allow the water to splash over its edge to a new ground level pool. This will increase the visual and auditory appeal of the fountains.*
- *Provide elevated seating areas adjacent to the fountains for movable tables and chairs.*
- *Provide an elevated seating area adjacent to the balustrade so that visitors can observe the activities on Fifth Avenue.*

- 
- *Provide a cafe on the north terrace to provide proprietary security for the area adjacent to 42nd Street. (The cafe should provide bus boy servicing for the seating area adjacent to it.) Until new access points are added, the cafe should occupy the lower terrace level of the entrance.*
  - *Provide a buffer planting between the fountain seating area and the cafe seating.*
  - *Provide seating alcoves in a formal landscape on the south terrace.*
  - *Enhance landscaping and add seating at the two lower entrance terraces.*

# demonstration projects

The Parks Council initiated four demonstration projects during the summer of 1980: new landscaping in part of the 42nd Street alley, bookstalls on the fountain plaza, the Bryant Park Cafe at the 42nd Street midblock entrance, and an off-peak entertainment program. In addition, the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation supplemented parks maintenance staff with additional manpower, refurbished the fountains at the front of the Library, and completed negotiations for a seasonal cafe on the north terrace in front of the Library. The analysis that follows evaluates the impact of these improvements on visitors' behavior and impressions of the Park, and comments on the location and management of these programs.

## re-landscaping project

This project involved the removal of most of the shrubs in the alley along 42nd Street and the Avenue of the Americas. The shrubs were past maturity and unmaintained – overgrown and unsightly. Their location adjacent to the wrought iron fence created a visual barrier into the Park. The shrubs and the center areas of most of the ivy beds were replaced with flowers. For the most part, the flowers grew well and added greatly to the color and interest of the alley. They were most effective where the entire landscape was intact. In other areas, where the ivy had been trampled and shrubs removed without landscape restoration, flowers were less effective. This was especially true of the major Park entrance area from the 42nd Street and the Avenue of the Americas corner.



The maintenance of the planting project has been superb, even though the planting of annuals is time-consuming and requires the constant care of a gardener. Aside from the care of the plants, the presence of the same gardener in the Park each day has had an impact on the security of the 42nd Street allee. Frequent visitors have come to know Jesus Acosta, and respect the work he is doing. His interaction with the visitors began to give the Park a personal identity. Thanks to this relationship between park users and Mr. Acosta, and to his ability to restore damaged areas quickly, there was less litter in his area, and little vandalism of the plants. The project was not only a successful test of a planting concept, but also a successful test of putting a single employee in charge of park operations in a particular area.

#### Recommendations

- *Replace all overgrown plant materials in the Park that contribute to security problems with more appropriate plants.*
- *Use flowering plants to complement new activities within the Park. They can also be an attraction in their own right, to encourage people to walk along a certain path, or to provide visitors with a photographic background. But because of the need for careful maintenance, flowers should be used only where their impact on any of these uses is significant.*
- *Establish a maintenance program in which the Park staff responsible for the plantings in a particular area is responsible for other forms of light maintenance in the same area. The staff will begin to be recognized by frequent visitors to the Park, which will build their morale and interest in their "territory".*
- *Install an irrigation system, which would make it easier and quicker to water the plants.*

# bookstalls



The introduction of bookstalls on the fountain plaza increased the activity on the plaza at lunchtime and into the late afternoon. The people browsing at the bookstalls represent a cross-section of the people who work, live and shop in the area. The combination of bookstalls and private enterprise is a successful way of relating the image of the Library to the Park. The structures that identify the bookstall location are good identifying elements, of a scale that is appropriate for the Park.

The present location of the bookstalls in relationship to the plaza and to each other has created some minor problems in circulation and visual accessibility (Figure 15). As with most outdoor sales, as success grows, so does the space occupied. The Strand bookstall is the closest to the fountain and has had tremendous success: there have been times when its book displays have almost reached the fountain. Guidelines for space occupancy should be established now, while the project is still considered a demonstration, and before the concessionnaires view their location as a given rather than a complement to Park activities.

A greater concern are the "dead spaces" that are created behind the bookstalls. These are potential areas for abuse, as shown by the continued marijuana dealing on the benches behind the Strand bookstall. Also, the bookstalls present a dull back to the visitor entering the Park from 42nd Street, rather than a display of activity and an invitation to participate.

Future restoration programs will include the refurbishing of the Lowell Fountain by the Parks Council. At the moment, the only seating on the plaza is on the fountain rim. Additional recommendations in this report call for a substantial increase in seating around the fountain's north, south, and east sides. The plaza is also the focus of off-peak hour entertainment in the Park, and will most likely continue as the setting for these programs.

Figure 15

- Control Zone
- ▤ Seating
- ➔ Views to Book Displays
- ➡ Direction of Book Stall

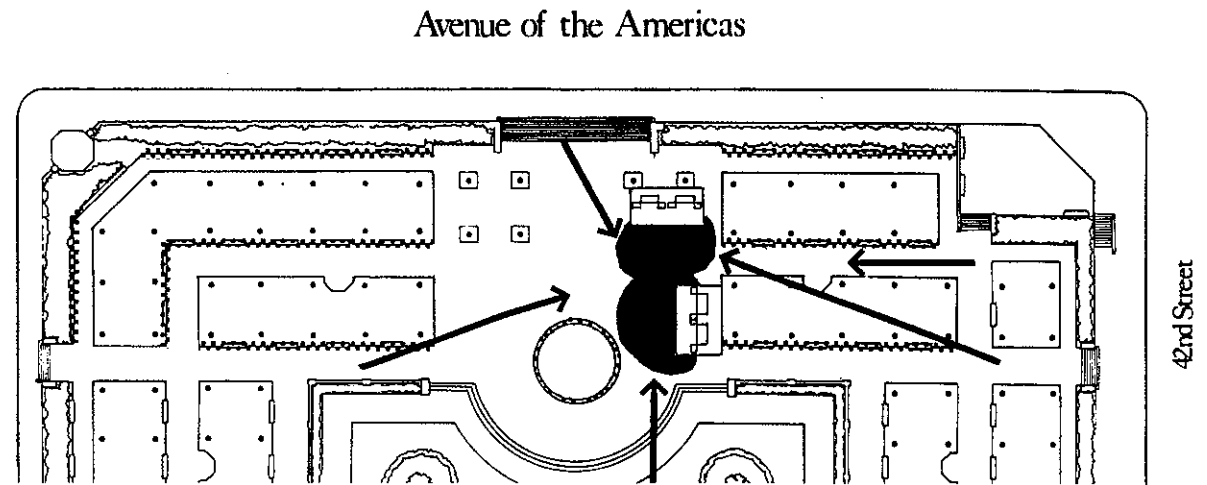


Figure A Existing Book Stall Orientations

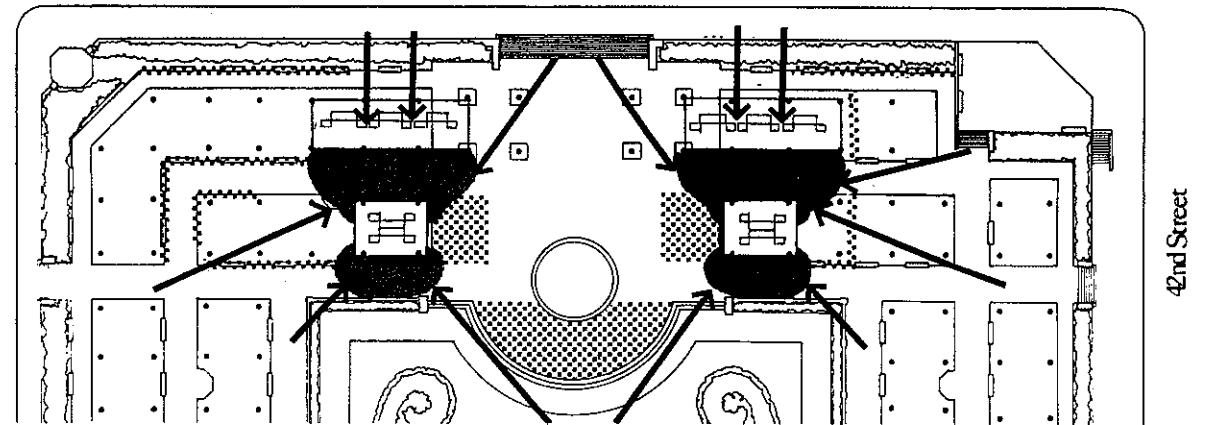


Figure B Proposed Book Stall Orientations

Additionally, the plaza provides a circulation route for people moving north-south, or entering the Park from the Avenue of the Americas. While we do not anticipate pedestrian congestion that would impair the quality of the space, we do believe that any amenities that permanently occupy areas on the plaza should complement its other uses.

#### Recommendations

- *Re-locate the Strand bookstall closer to 42nd Street with the stalls placed back to back facing east and west. (It would then occupy the southern edge of the key marijuana marketplace.) The re-orienting of the bookstalls would make the activity around the book display visible from all directions, limiting dead back spaces and permitting a view of the activity from 42nd Street.*
- *Provide a buffer on the plaza edge of the book market to prevent the booksellers from expanding into the new seating areas. This buffer would also provide additional security for the bookseller. The buffer could be a planting bed, or recycled sections of the balustrade removed in the Park for new entrances.*
- *Locate the bookstalls along the Avenue of the Americas so that they least obstruct views into the Park and concentrate the focus of their activity along the middle north-south path.*
- *Encourage an early morning opening of the bookstalls to coincide with the commuter influx. This demonstration program should be tested when tables and chairs are provided around the fountain, and when a coffee vendor is operating on the fountain plaza.*
- *Apply the bookstall concept to areas along the upper terrace walkway. A year-round facility could be built in this location.*





## bryant park cafe'



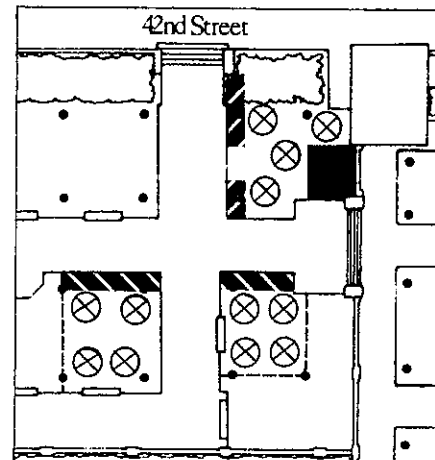
The Bryant Park Cafe was installed by the Parks Council near the 42nd Street mid-block entrance. The cafe consists of two table areas on either side of a canopy covered walkway. Food service is provided by a push cart vendor who was encouraged to expand his food offering beyond the usual hot dogs and soda.

The cafe is popular with lunchtime visitors to the Park, many of whom bring their lunch into the cafe and spend time eating and talking with friends. Later in the afternoon the cafe is used by shoppers and tourists who see the cafe from the street and come in to sit and relax. If the vendor is at the cafe people will use the service and there will be more people using the seating area than if the vendor is not present. When no food service is available, most Park visitors in the cafe are talking with friends, writing, or reading.

The cafe demonstrates that a table and chair area that is supported by a food service and visible from the sidewalk can be well used. Observations of the cafe indicate that the hours of operation of the food service is important to maintaining active use of the facility. However, there are some drawbacks in the design and management of the cafe.

The tables that were selected for the cafe are oversized for the area and poorly constructed. The table tops soon became warped and look vandalized. In fact, there had been little actual vandalism of the cafe until the facility began to look damaged; and then spray painting of the table tops began. The location on top of the existing granite-set paving makes it difficult to move chairs about and for the chairs to sit solidly on the ground. Because of the portability of the chairs, police barricades have been placed on the 42nd Street side of the cafe. While there is a need to prevent chairs from being carried away, the barricades are uncomplementary. The barricades and oversized tables make the seating area crowded and difficult to move within the cafe.

Figure 16



Proposed Lay-out for  
Food Service Near 42nd Street  
Mid-block Entrance

- ⊗ Tables
- ▨ Attractive fences
- Refreshment stand

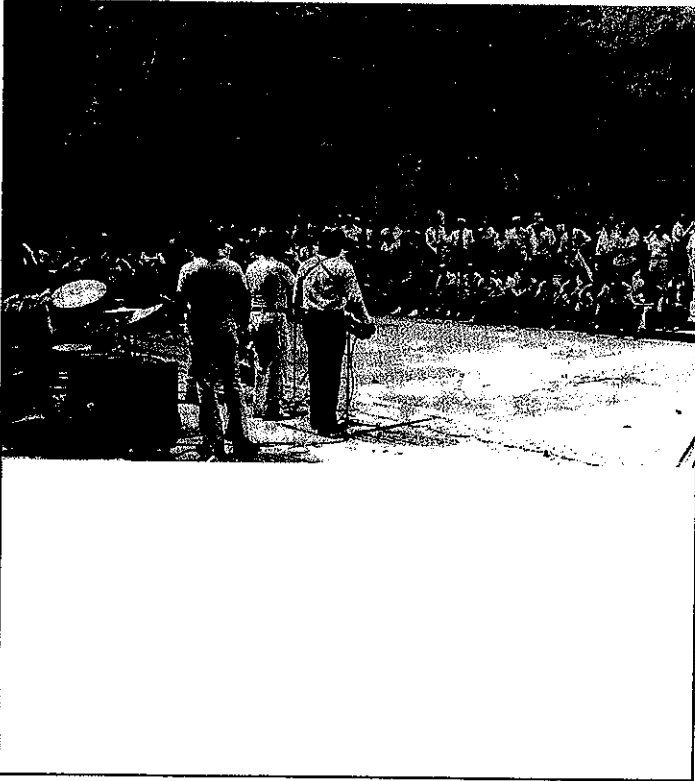
The umbrellas while they do not provide weather protectors do add a lot of color to the area and focus attention on the cafe. The canopy over the walkway draws attention to the cafe but does not provide shelter for the seating area.

The food service does not offer a diverse menu. The vendor does not appear to feel any obligation to providing an attractive food service or maintaining the table and chair areas around him. The maintenance of the area has become the responsibility of the Parks Council gardener. However, the major shortcoming of the vendor in helping to demonstrate the value of the cafe is its limited hours of operation. No service is provided in the morning and often no service is provided after the lunch period. There are also days when the vendor does not show up at all. Without the concessionaire being present to provide some security for the seating area, chairs have been locked up, discouraging their use.

#### Recommendations

- Provide a complete food service that operates from early morning until early evening.
- Provide new tables for the cafe which are smaller in diameter and of sturdier construction.
- Locate a temporary food service facility in the area adjacent to the existing cafe and expand seating around this location (see FIGURE 16.)
- Provide a landscaped border between the walkways and seating area.

# entertainment

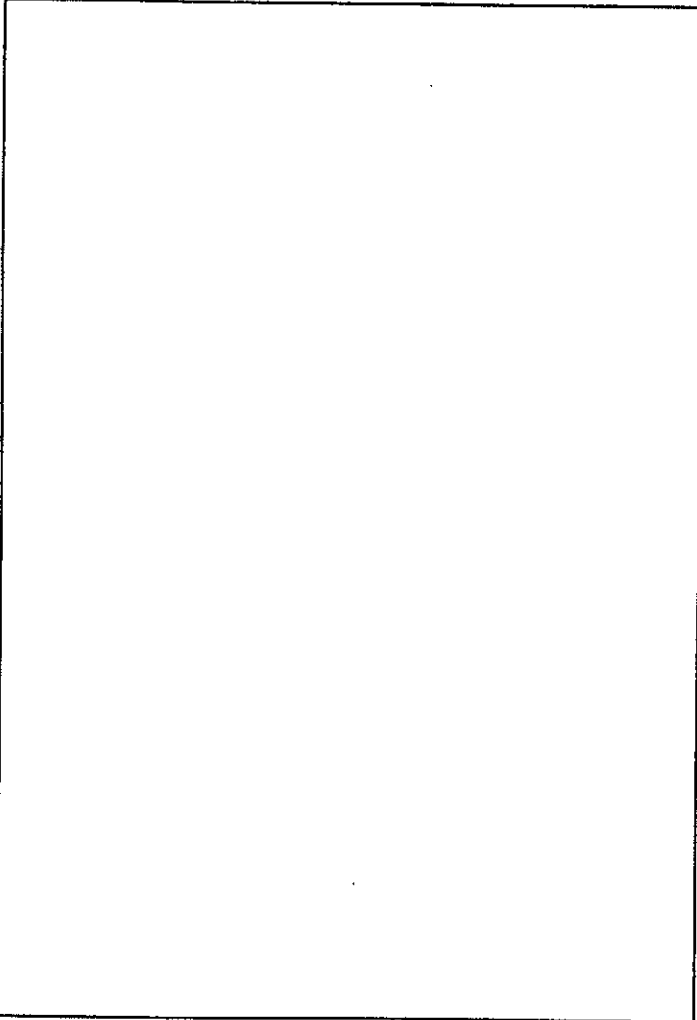


Entertainment is sponsored in the Park by the Music Performance Trust Fund, the Avenue of the Americas Association, and the Parks Council. On the sidewalks outside the Park, street entertainers attract crowds. The front of the New York Public Library has long been known as one of the better spots for street entertainers. The sidewalks are wide, there are steps where people can sit or stand, and there is a captive lunchtime population on the steps and on Fifth Avenue.

Other locations that entertainers choose – on Fifth Avenue near 42nd Street, mid-block on the 42nd street sidewalk and occasionally at the Avenue of the Americas plaza at 42nd Street – have the common characteristic of exposure to a large number of people. Changes at entrances along 42nd Street and at the 41st Street entrance will provide a setting where street performers can position themselves above the sidewalk flow of people and comfortably attract audiences. These performers are a source of low-cost entertainment that might be used in the park as part of an established series.

The Music Performance Trust Fund has provided fine lunchtime entertainment on summer Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Their series has attracted about four hundred people per concert, half of whom come to the Park because of the concert. The series has also had its difficulties. There are no parking or changing room facilities for the musicians. The present performance location in front of the Bryant statue has a limited audience capacity, and will be compromised further when the terrace mid-block walkway is built. During the hottest of summer days, there is no shade for the performers.

The Parks Council off-peak hour entertainment program was centered on the Fountain Plaza between the hours of 2-3 p.m. and 5-6 p.m. The program included a variety of entertainments: puppets, theatre, gymnastics, music, mime, and dance. The audience varied in size from 10 to 250 people. There was a recognizable repeat audience for dance programs. The program drew a large number of people to the plaza and should be



continued, with refinements based on this year's experience. A detailed account of the program may be obtained from the Parks Council.

#### Recommendations

- *Develop an entertainment program with a recognizable sequence of events, so that the public can identify a day and time with a certain kind of entertainment. For example, jazz could be presented each Thursday at 12:15, classical music on Friday at the same time.*
- *Provide electrical outlets for sound systems at entertainment areas.*
- *Provide a portable podium for entertainment at the fountain plaza.*
- *Provide changing rooms. If the park office and maintenance yard were relocated to the enclosed area adjacent to the 40th Street side of the Library, the office structure could provide a work space for an artist in residence program, and changing rooms for entertainers.*
- *Provide on-street parking facilities for performers' vehicles.*
- *Publicize schedules of park events in all media, including company newsletters, posters at bus shelters, and on notice boards at Park entrances.*

## maintenance

Prior to the summer of 1980, eight full-time Parks Department employees and CETA workers maintained Bryant Park and the grounds of the Public Library. This force did not seem adequate to pick up litter, maintain plant material, and replace damaged landscapes and park furniture. The hiring of 3 additional employees by the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation and a full-time gardener by the Parks Council during the summer has improved maintenance dramatically. Regular visitors remarked that there was less litter; the shrubs were trimmed, the planting beds cleaned. The new staff had an impact far beyond their numbers. There was a little more zip in the regular Parks Department staff as they tried to keep up with the private staff.

It is clear that manpower and equipment cannot be cut back if the Park is to draw more visitors. While new amenities should encourage park users to become increasingly responsible for the proper disposal of trash and the reduction of vandalism, other proposed programs will require additional trained staff. New programs to increase floral plantings, refurbish fountains, provide concessions, place movable tables and chairs in the park, and present entertainment throughout the day will require new staff of various skills.

Dan Biederman and the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation have developed proposals for long-term maintenance of the Park that rely on the talents of private enterprise to maintain a quality landscape. A restructuring of the Park maintenance staff should be based on the division of the Park into maintenance zones, with a small team responsible for the different maintenance tasks in each particular area. This structure would allow the staff to interact with the public in a way that promotes a concern by the user for the condition of the park. The people hired to maintain the Park must, above all, enjoy working with people.