



# TALKS

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COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS FOR  
BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK'S  
NEW POOL AT SQUIBB PARK

# Pool Talks

Brooklyn Bridge Park (BBP) is committed to providing a 1.3-mile waterfront park that supports, preserves, and encourages dynamic experiences for social and recreational possibilities. With the ambitious goal of adapting the existing industrial site between two different but codependent ecosystems of the river and city, BBP strives to provide visitors with a sense of liveliness, cultural relevance, and safety.

Since its inception, BBP has explored and addressed the evolving needs of its community, through the design of its spaces, resource offerings, and programming. In June 2018, BBP announced plans to build a pool at Squibb Park, which sits just above Pier 1 and is connected to the park through Squibb Bridge. Along with the announcement, BBP committed to launching a community engagement process, called Pool Talks, to ensure the ideas, desires, concerns, and opportunities of the public were included and reflected as part of the pool design process.

This document is the result of Pool Talks— a series of public workshops, surveys, data analysis, tabling experiences, fieldwork, and many conversations with the Brooklyn Bridge Park community. It documents a set of community priorities that will be used for the following purposes:

- **To guide and craft a Request for Proposal for architects and designers interested in designing the new pool, to be launched early 2019.**
- **As a tool for evaluating design submissions and as a starting point for future programming, operations, and communications planning for the pool.**

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# Swimming at the Park

Swimming has been a key part of Brooklyn Bridge Park since the beginning. In the summer of 2007, a year before the construction of Brooklyn Bridge Park began, the park hosted a floating pool docked to Pier 4. Called the Floating Pool Lady, the pool quickly became a popular destination for New Yorkers keen to experience recreation in this formerly industrial area — and it became a window into what the ambitious Brooklyn Bridge Park project could be.

When the floating pool departed later that year and made its way to the Bronx, Brooklynites clamored for a return of swimming at the park. This eventually led to the creation of the Pop-Up Pool in 2012 in the Pier 2 Uplands. When its five-year contract ended, BBP extended it by an additional two years due to popular demand. The Pop-Up Pool finally ended its run in summer 2018, when BBP began the process to create a new, permanent pool at the park.

## A NEW POOL AT SQUIBB PARK

The success of the Pop-Up Pool made it clear that there was a demand for permanent swimming at the park. After careful investigation of multiple sites within the park, including piers, uplands, and in the river, BBP selected Squibb Park. (To learn more about BBP’s site selection criteria and process, jump to page 46). The Squibb Park site presented an opportunity to create a unique amenity for the community, taking into consideration how a new pool could best serve current and potential park goers and the surrounding neighborhoods. Subject to necessary approvals, the New York City Parks Department intends to enter into an agreement with BBP for the development, operation, and maintenance of a pool and optional related amenities at Squibb Park.

***As a world-class park, we are always striving to provide the best amenities and activities for park visitors. The temporary Pop-Up Pool has been a much-loved summer attraction and now we are thrilled to announce plans to bring a permanent pool to the Park.***



*Eric Landau  
Brooklyn Bridge Park President*

# A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROCESS

## PLANNING THE NEW POOL

BBP understands that public pools can be many things to many people. They are places to gather and converse, to relax and cool off, to exercise, to learn, to have fun, and to spend time in one's community. As with all spaces in the park, the new pool must reflect the diverse interests, concerns, and aspirations of park users as well as the surrounding residents. That is why BBP decided to prioritize public feedback in their process for creating the new pool. It allows them to ensure that pool users, park users, and neighbors shape the design and programming for their public space.

Following the selection of Squibb Park for the pool, BBP took a series of steps to analyze the site, including exploring different pool sizes, configurations, and access to the park from Brooklyn Heights. This analysis supported BBP to understand the opportunities and constraints of the site and set the framework for the planning process.

The next step in the process involved a robust community engagement campaign called Pool Talks. Pool Talks is a targeted effort by BBP to learn from its community about their experiences, needs, and interests in order to translate those insights into a pool and public space that reflects and serves their diverse perspectives. BBP will use the community recommendations, which have been published in this report, to craft a Request for Proposals for architects to submit designs for the new pool. The findings from Pool Talks will help BBP evaluate the submissions on how well architects incorporate community priorities.

After the submission period, the community will have a chance to weigh in on the leading design proposals. Once the final design has been selected and a plan is approved, BBP will communicate construction details and timeline to the public. Finally, these steps will culminate in a permanent pool in Brooklyn Bridge Park. *No timelines have been finalized for the project as of yet.*

# Getting the Community Involved

By prioritizing community voices, BBP knows they are better equipped to create a pool that is unique and has lasting value for their community. Over a three-month period, BBP, in partnership with TYTHEdesign, sought to collect insights from park goers, neighborhood residents, elected officials, community groups and associations, and park staff. The team captured the feedback of stakeholders through interviews, surveys (in person and online), interactive experiences in the park, and public workshops. This multi-pronged approach allowed the team to gather information from different people in a variety of forms.

The approach to Pool Talks centered on three key drivers: transparency, co-creation, and broad usability. The overarching goal was to ensure meaningful, inclusive, and expansive engagement that ultimately would result in a community-driven pool design. More specifically, the engagement process aimed to:

- Creatively and effectively engage park users, local residents, and other key stakeholders in the design and programming of the new pool.
- Distill engagement feedback into design, programming, and management recommendations.
- Document engagement findings to inform future design and programming decisions.

With any research study, there will inevitably be limitations. In the case of Pool Talks, the research sample was not wholly representative of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Community. In particular, seniors, men, and people of color were underrepresented in the sample. In addition, participants were predominantly those who already engage with the park regularly. Pool Talks took advantage of the existing network of people who visit the park on a regular basis by promoting the surveys and workshops via the BBP newsletter, on social media pages and through signage and activities at the park. While this engaged a group of people who are very likely to be future pool users, there was less input from those who are not already connected to the park. These research limitations should inform which groups BBP should engage in the following stages of this process, as well as for similar projects in the future.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

The team started their research process with two main questions in mind:

- 1. What are the broad opportunities and challenges surrounding a new pool in Squibb Park?**
- 2. What specific ideas and design considerations that would augment opportunities and mitigate concerns for the new pool?**

# Overview of Pool Talks

Upon establishing the goals and principles for Pool Talks with BBP, TYTHEdesign developed a stakeholder engagement plan that worked to understand the neighborhood context and stakeholders’ perspectives about the project. To ensure an inclusive and expansive engagement was done, TYTHEdesign deployed a series of different engagement methods:

## INTERVIEWS

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The team conducted interviews with key stakeholders, including elected officials and their staff, local park residents from Pierhouse, and community organizations and associations. Interviewees provided information about the ideas and considerations of their constituents and helped the team connect to local networks.

## COMMUNITY CENSUS

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Community Census is an interactive information collection tool. The team used the tool at various locations within the park to capture the passive park user’s preferences on pool types, programming, and non-swimming amenities, and to spark conversations. These interactive experiences also provided the team with an opportunity to promote the upcoming Community Conversations and distribute surveys.

## SURVEY

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The team distributed surveys in English and Spanish online and in person in the park, at the Pop-Up Pool, and during large park events to capture people’s experiences with public pools and their ideas and concerns for the new pool. The survey asked respondents to rank various options, amenities, and programs, and offered opportunities for people to describe their thoughts in greater detail.

## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

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The team held two identical public workshops that involved a number of interactive activities and conversations surrounding potential pool types, concerns of access and neighborhood impact, as well as non-swimming amenities. Participants gathered in groups of 5-7 people and shared their experiences as park users, neighborhood residents, and Pop-Up Pool goers. They discussed a wide range of topics related to the pool and brainstormed ideas for creating an inclusive and exciting public resource.

# Pool Talks by the Numbers

OVER THE COURSE OF POOL TALKS, OVER 2000 COMMUNITY MEMBERS WERE ENGAGED.

1872

Survey responses

1100

Interactive Community  
Census participants

65

Community Conversation  
workshop participants

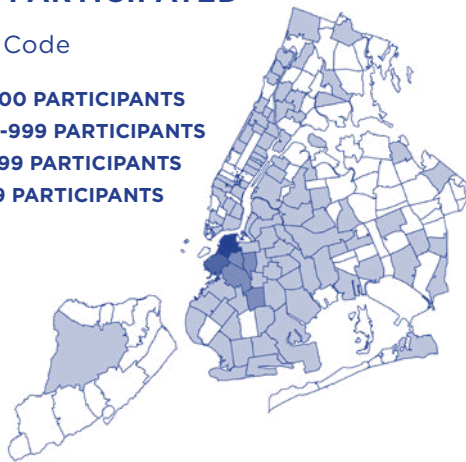
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Stakeholders  
Interviewed

## WHO PARTICIPATED

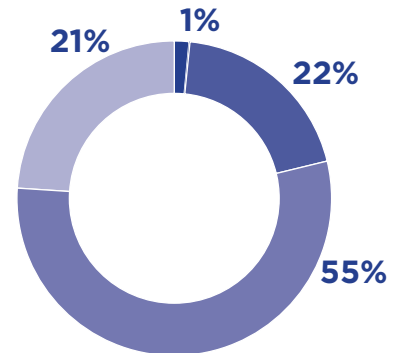
By zip Code

- +1000 PARTICIPANTS
- 100-999 PARTICIPANTS
- 20-99 PARTICIPANTS
- 0-19 PARTICIPANTS



By age

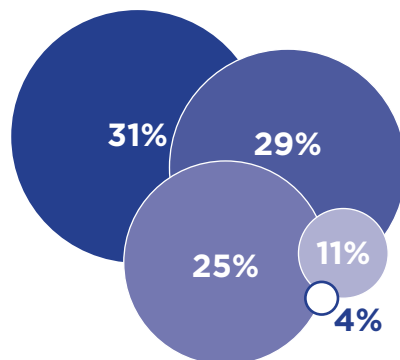
- 0-18
- 19-34
- 35-54
- +55



## THEIR HABITS

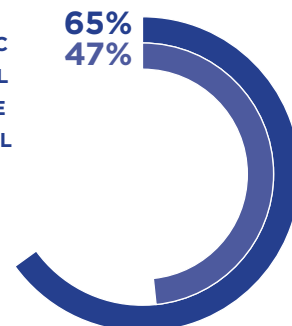
How often they go to Brooklyn Bridge Park

- OFTEN
- VERY OFTEN
- SOMEWHAT OFTEN
- RARELY
- BEEN ONCE

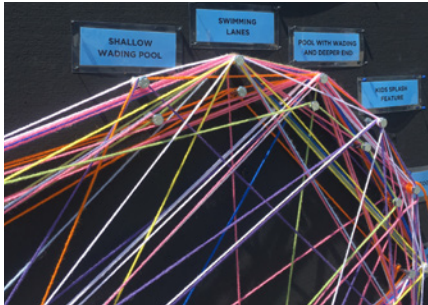
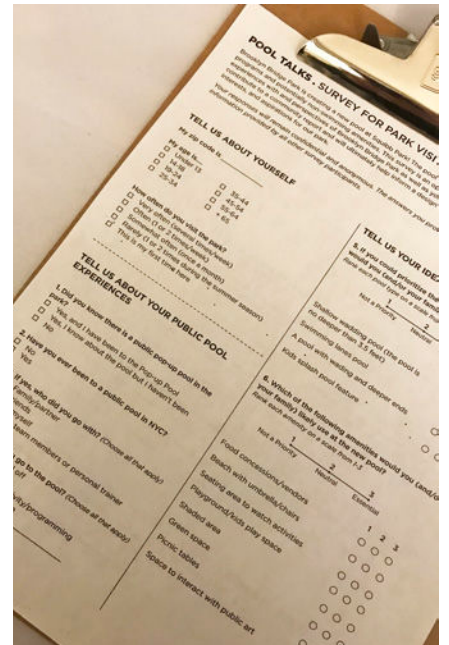
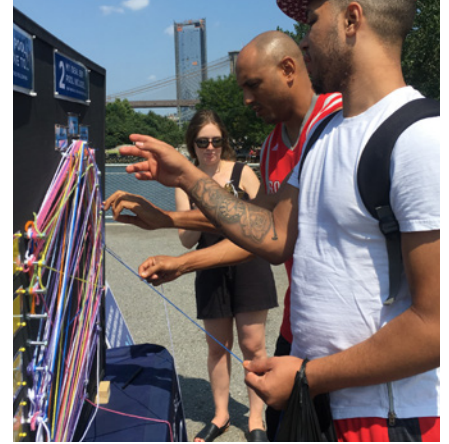


Portion of people who have been to NYC pools

- BEEN TO NYC PUBLIC POOL
- BEEN TO THE POP-UP POOL



POOL TALKS AMASSED OVER 500 IDEAS, CONCERNS, SOLUTIONS, AND QUESTIONS.



Community members engaged in Pool Talks by completing surveys during Movie Night at the park, marked their preferences on the Community Census tool, and participated in Community Conversation workshops at PS8.



# COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

## OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

Through the engagement process, there were a set of consistently recurring themes. They came up in survey comments, in interviews and during workshops conversations.

Community members spoke often about **inclusivity**. They want the pool design, its programming, and operations to be open and inviting to as many audiences, ages, and uses as possible. Participants were reluctant to settle on a single type of pool or program, rather, they focused on ways that this public resource could be enjoyed by a diverse group of people and interests.

Participants consistently discussed a desire for the new pool to be **flexible** and able to adapt to different uses as well as to the time of day and year. This is something many participants felt is successful in Brooklyn Bridge Park's existing spaces and resource offerings, and wanted to have it carried forward to the new pool.

Community members discussed the unique fact that Squibb Park sits at the **intersection of neighborhood and park**. People regularly shared concerns about the impact of the pool on residential streets and hoped that the approach to its design and programming would incorporate strategies to mitigate potential disturbances.

## ABOUT THE PRIORITIES

The following section documents a series of Community Priorities for the new pool. For each, there is an explanation of the priority and a list of design considerations, which community members propose are explored by the architect and BBP. In addition, data and quotes from both the survey and workshops have been included. *Priorities and design consideration are not listed in order of importance.*

Community Priorities are divided into the following categories:

### POOL DESIGN

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### POOL USE

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### NON-SWIMMING AMENITIES

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### OFF-SEASON

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### ACCESS TO AND THROUGH SQUIBB PARK

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### SURROUNDING IMPACT

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# POOL DESIGN

*As long as it's a decent size  
and I can swim laps, I'll  
come.*

”

*The pool should  
incorporate the tradition,  
culture, and spirit of  
Brooklyn.*

”

# MAXIMIZE CAPACITY WITHOUT CROWDING

An important driver behind the creation of the new pool is for BBP to expand swimming opportunities beyond what was available at the Pop-Up Pool. This is reflected by community members who repeatedly expressed interest in the new pool being as big as possible (within reason). While participants did not stipulate specific dimensions, recommendations for a large pool came up numerous times in survey comments and at community conversations. “Bigger is better” was a common sentiment.

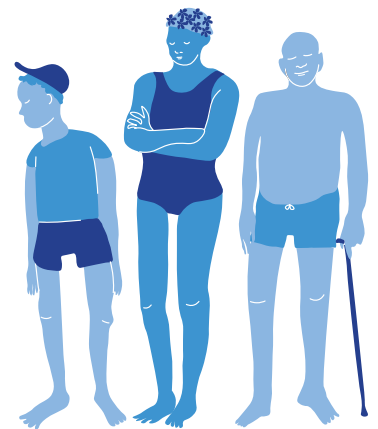
However, enthusiasm for a large pool also came with concerns about crowding, especially considering the size limitations of the Squibb Park site. Since the Pop-Up Pool was located within Brooklyn Bridge Park, visitors queuing to use the pool could wait in the park without much disturbance, but Squibb Park does not offer the same opportunity. Therefore, the pool capacity and visitor management must account for causes of potential overcrowding, including people congregating around the pool who are either waiting to swim or not using the pool and people staying too long, preventing others from attending the pool.

The community recommends that BBP not only calculate pool capacity by the number of swimmers, but also account for the number of people who will be in the space and those waiting to use the pool. For example, if the pool and the surrounding deck can accommodate 100 people, then the waiting area or additional seating options should accommodate 100 as well.

## WHAT WE HEARD

+ 38

comments related to the capacity of the pool and the potential for overcrowding. These came up in open-ended survey questions and during workshops.



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- Implement a controlled and fair process for pool attendance to prevent overcrowding and allow a greater number of people to access the pool. This could include timed sessions similar to the system used at the Pop-Up Pool (but with potentially longer sessions).
- Consider creating a designated waiting area within Squibb Park or Brooklyn Bridge Park.

# DESIGN A POOL THAT IS FLEXIBLE

There are many different ways to use or experience Brooklyn Bridge Park, and the pool should be no exception. Community members are most interested in a pool that is designed to serve a variety of audiences and interests, from young children to seniors and from experienced swimmers to first-timers. Accordingly, the community would like a multifunctional pool design.

Community members concluded that pool types too specific in function or that target certain age groups present several key concerns. For example, a lap pool excludes children because it can be unsafe, intimidating, or unappealing to very young people. Also, a proper lap pool might be too large for the site and limit space for non-swimming amenities. By contrast, wading pools can be overly oriented towards young children and may exclude adult and teen use. In addition, wading pools cannot accommodate lap swimming and are less optimal for swimming lessons.

Even though the community did not clearly define the specific pool type, there is a lot of interest in a pool that combines a shallow end for wading, an area for open swimming, and a space long enough for lap swimming. By encompassing a variety of pool experiences into one space, the design can be inclusive to a wide range of users.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*A combination pool seems to be the most inclusive of everyone. It has the possibility for a lap pool, a kid's pool, etc.*



68%

of survey respondents report that a pool with wading and deeper ends is essential.

44%

of survey respondents claim that swimming lanes are essential for the pool.

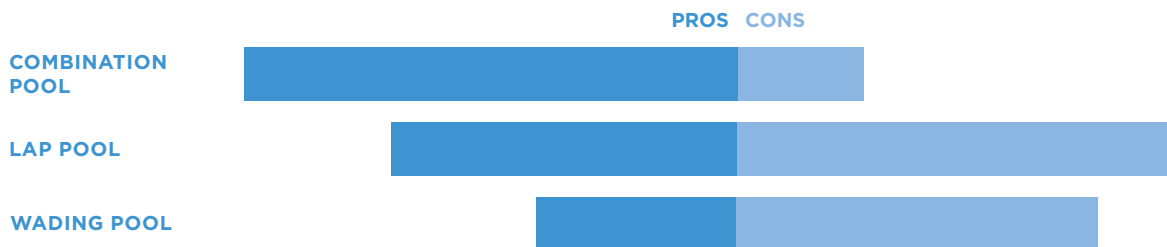
## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Create a portion of the pool designated for lap lanes, roughly 25 yards in length. This was especially important for survey respondents over the age of 45, majority of which expressed that a lap pool is essential.
- Designate a wading area (or shallow end) that is children- and senior-friendly. Interest in a wading pool reached 43% amongst survey respondents over 45.
- Design an area that is deep enough to allow for new swimmers to graduate to different levels.
- Create a pool that can be separated into different sections for different uses, ages, or programs.
- Explore the potential for two separate pools (one deeper and one shallow) versus one large pool. This would allow for different pool experiences to coexist more safely and address the concerns of parents and caretakers in regards to monitoring children.

## PREFERENCES

Participants at the Community Conversations brainstormed the pros and cons of different pool types. The results showed that a combination pool with deeper and shallow ends as having the most pros versus cons.

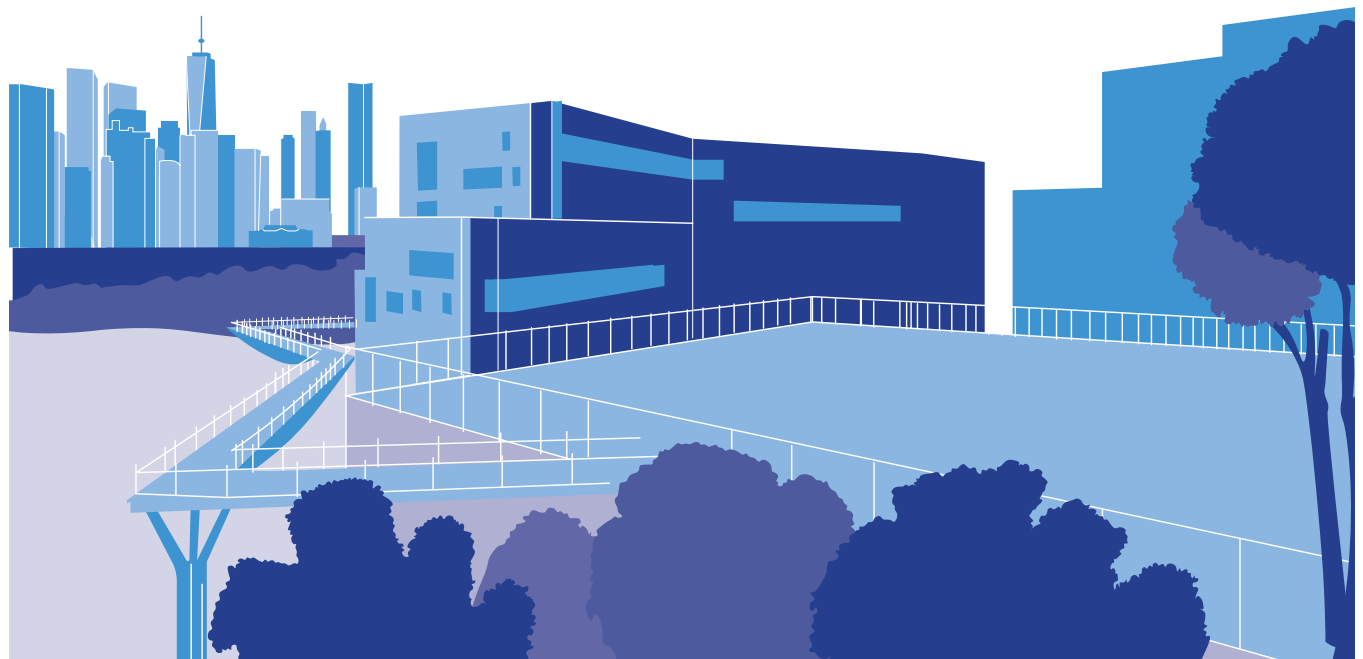


# CONSIDER VIEWS FROM ALL ANGLES

Unlike the rest of Brooklyn Bridge Park, which is separated from Brooklyn Heights by the BQE, Squibb Park is located in between the park and the neighborhood. This creates a unique challenge for the physical design, considering that it will be within view of many Brooklyn Heights and Pierhouse residents.

Surrounding residents expressed concerns that the new pool, including its surrounding structures (such as non-swimming amenities and shade structures), may be an eyesore and could obstruct sight lines in the neighborhood.

As a result, the community recommends that the pool design consider not only what happens inside Squibb Park's boundaries, but also how the pool looks from the outside and above as well.



# GET CREATIVE WITH THE POOL DESIGN

Swimming in New York City public pools can sometimes feel limited by their uniformly rectangular shape, consistent depth, minimalistic surrounding environment, lack of non-swimming amenities, and stringent rules.

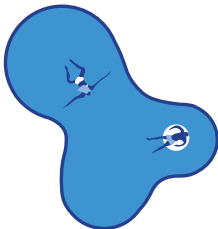
The community wants the new pool's physical design and experience to depart from traditional New York City public pools. They expressed a desire to include creativity and playfulness into the design, making Squibb Park Pool unlike any other pool.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*Design a pool to be something that really stands out!*



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Incorporate elements of play into the pool and its surroundings, such as diving boards, slides, pool toys, and other features that accommodate children, as well as public art, education, and water amenities.
- Do not be limited by the traditional rectangular shape.
- Infuse imaginativeness into the pool design while being conscious of making it approachable to all people.
- Relax strict New York City public pool rules pertaining to timed sessions or bringing books, electronics, and food into the pool space.
- Establish longer hours of operation than those typical of other New York City public pools.

# POOL USE

*It's so common for kids to get swim lessons. But as a native New Yorker, I'd say that adult classes are needed.*

”

*I don't want activities dominating the pool and getting in the way of people using it just to relax.*

”



# BALANCE ACTIVITIES WITH OPEN SWIMMING

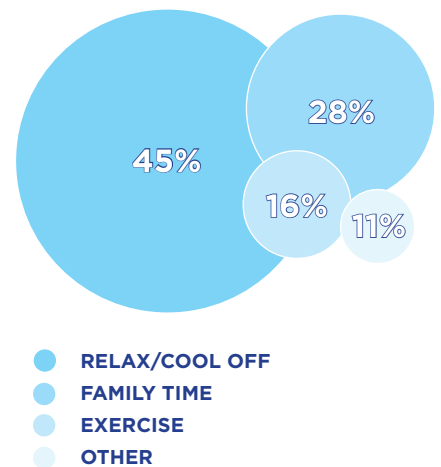
Programming at the new pool was a top issue for all engaged in Pool Talks. Suggestions ranged from different types of activities to the management and operations of the space, to the use of timed sessions for audience-specific swimming. However, across these varied conversations, there was a clear consensus that the pool needs to strike a balance between planned activities and unplanned, open swim.

The community largely agreed that the new pool should not be overly structured or cater to a particular programming type; rather, it should accommodate many different uses. Community comments about maintaining an unprogrammed space are similarly reflected in people's current pool-going habits. 56% of survey respondents report that they go to public pools to relax and cool off. Only 4% said that they go to attend an activity or programming.

Yet, despite their concerns about over-programming, the community was still excited about the programming opportunities this new pool could provide. Survey respondents showed the highest preference towards activities geared toward swimming lessons for both kids and adults. Following that, participants were most interested in exercise opportunities that accommodate a wide range of ages, such as competitive swimming for kids and water exercise classes.

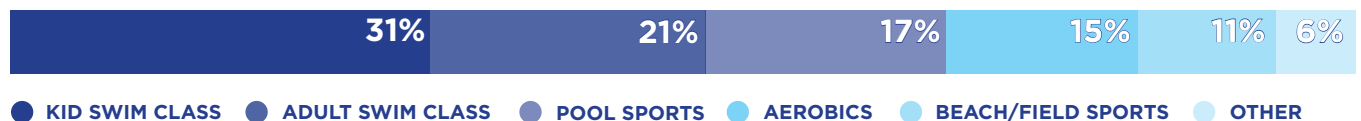
## WHAT WE HEARD

Interest in a mostly un-programmed pool is reflected in the existing habits of community members – 45% of survey respondents report that they go to public pools to relax or cool off.



## PREFERENCES

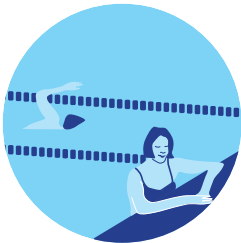
When asked about people's programming preferences, survey respondents showed greatest interest in swimming lessons, including those for kids and adults. Additional ideas include free swim, lap swimming, arts and culture events, after schools programs, and lessons in scuba diving, synchronized swimming, and CPR.



# CATER TO A VARIETY OF AUDIENCES

Whereas the Pop-Up Pool tended to attract a particular audience, namely families and young children, there is interest for the new pool to expand beyond such demographics. Participants recommend that the operations of the new pool consider how the space can be used by different groups and for different uses, both simultaneously and at separate times. The community expressed that the operations of the space need to accommodate different audience groups equally and provide more than one time to access the space.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Assign different types of swimming sessions for different age groups at varying hours in the day, such as lap swimming sessions, adults-only sessions, children's sessions, and local residents' sessions.
- Make use of temporary dividers to separate spaces in the pool to designate different uses (such as lap swimming, open swimming, and children's area).
- Extend the hours of operation of the pool, allowing for swimming before and after work hours (ideally 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.).

## WHAT WE HEARD

# 100+

comments suggested the idea of swimming sessions. Among that recommendation, around half were suggestions for lap swimming sessions and another quarter were for adult-only sessions.

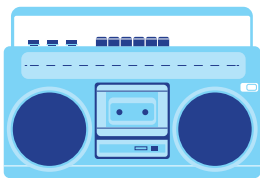
*I'm about to have a kid, but during my pre-kid days, I always wished the Pop-Up Pool had a kid free hour, maybe at night.* ”

# MITIGATE NOISE IN & OUTSIDE THE POOL

In comparison to the current use of Squibb Park that is relatively quiet, the presence of a pool will inevitably raise the noise levels of the space. Even though many community members noted that because Squibb Park is below the street level of residents on Columbia Heights so some noise will be buffered, they still expressed several concerns about increased noise, especially during evenings. Additionally, the proximity of Squibb Park to the BQE raised concerns about the noise levels from traffic in the pool space.

As a result of these concerns, the pool design and programming should both mitigate noise for residents in the surrounding neighborhood as well as attempt to block the sounds of the BQE into Squibb Park.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



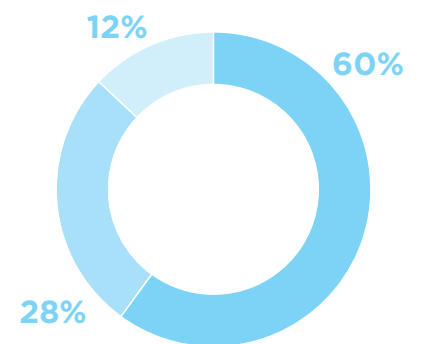
- Mitigate noise within and outside the pool using built structures or landscaping.
- Restrict amplified music in the pool or during certain hours.
- If extending the pool hours, consider ways to help keep the space quiet during sensitive hours.
- Plan programming that is respectful of noise levels during the evening.

## WHAT WE HEARD

# 49%

of Pop-Up Pool survey respondents agreed that noise levels were too loud.

Concerns about increased noise levels caused by the new pool ranged by location, with the majority of concerns being about sound in Squibb Park.



- IN SQUIBB PARK
- IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
- UNSPECIFIED LOCATION

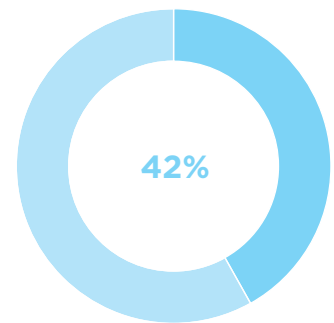
# KEEP THE POOL SAFE & WELL-MAINTAINED

As with any public asset, providing a space that is well-designed and maintained is equally as important as safety, and for the new pool, it is no different.

Community members spoke about the importance of safety for swimmers, security of people's belongings, and management of loitering in and outside of Squibb Park. Many of the concerns were driven by the location of the site, which is below street level and isolated, and historically has led to safety concerns. In addition to safety concerns, many community members expressed concerns regarding the overall cleanliness, hygiene, and maintenance of the space. For many, safety and cleanliness go hand in hand.

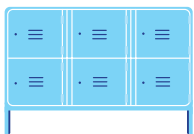
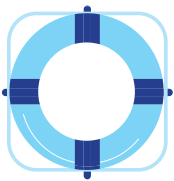
As a result, the community requires that the design and operations of the pool and the surrounding space help to make it a safe and comfortable experience for swimmers and others passing through and by the space.

## WHAT WE HEARD



**42%**  
of survey respondents felt that the bathroom and changing room facilities at the Pop-Up Pool were large enough.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Ensure there are enough lifeguards to maintain a safe space for swimmers of all skill levels at the pool.
- Create clear sight lines between the pool and its surrounding areas, such as a seating area, to allow parents and caregivers to keep an eye on kids in the pool.
- Utilize security staff to maintain a well-managed space.
- Include sufficient lockers of different sizes at the pool to ensure users can keep their belongings secure.
- Use lighting to create high visibility in and around the space.
- Consider hours of operation that promote safety in and surrounding the pool.

# NON- SWIMMING AMENITIES

*How do we balance the size of the pool and the space for amenities?*

”

*Consider ways to avoid creating competition for seating spots.*

”

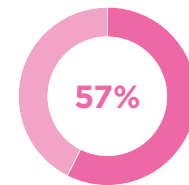
# PRIORITIZE THE POOL BEFORE AMENITIES

Community members want the new space to focus on swimming before anything else. When it comes to adding non-swimming amenities, participants felt that they should be designed to enhance the pool-going experience, not compete with it. This suggestion is also linked to the desire for a large pool, as discussed previously, and the concern that non-swimming amenities might overcrowd the space and downsize the pool. They also pointed out that many amenities, from concessions to sports facilities and play spaces, are already provided in Brooklyn Bridge Park and, therefore, are wary of replicating them. In addition, community members recommended that non-swimming amenities be focused on serving pool users rather than those passing through Squibb Park, in order to decrease congestion in the space.

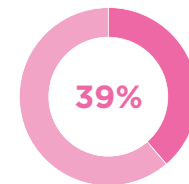
Notably, this recommendation does not include bathrooms, changing rooms, and locker rooms that will, without question, be included at the new pool. In several survey comments and workshop conversations, participants discussed the need for clean and comfortable bathrooms and changing rooms as well as ample locker space.

## WHAT WE HEARD

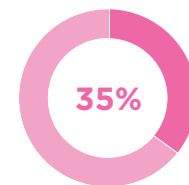
When asked about preferences on different non-swimming amenities, the following percentages of survey respondents reported that these were essential.



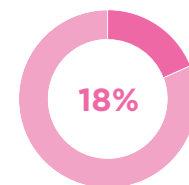
SEATING



FOOD CONCESSIONS



PLAY SPACE



PUBLIC ART

# CONCESSIONS SHOULD COMPLEMENT THE POOL

The old saying that you should wait at least 30 minutes after eating before you swim shouldn't stop concessions from being included at the new pool. Community members expressed that pool goers would benefit from diverse and healthy food options, along with beverages and snacks. Participants noted that having food available allows people to enjoy the space for longer periods of time without having to exit to purchase food. They did not, however, feel that full restaurant service was necessary.

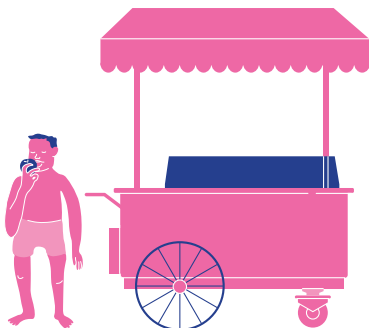
Regarding the recommendation for food, community members were clear that concessions should be focused on serving pool goers and not become a destination themselves. They felt this was important for reducing congestion in the space as well as diminishing the possibility of non-permitted vendors showing up on Columbia Heights. In addition, people expressed the need for concessions to be well-operated and maintained to avoid littering and deter animals. In terms of non-food concessions, community members similarly showed interest in offerings that complement the pool experience, such as sunscreen, goggles, and towels.

## WHAT WE HEARD

# 63%

of people who responded to the survey at the Pop-Up Pool reported that they purchase food or drinks at the pool concession.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Include a system for rotating food vendors that would allow for flexibility in food offerings and adapt to different seasons.
- Strategically locate concessions to prioritize their use by pool goers rather than general park users, in order to reduce potential congestion in the space.

# INCORPORATE WATER INTO PLAY SPACES

In general, play spaces were not high on people's lists for the new pool. However, when they were discussed, participants focused on ways that play spaces could incorporate water.

In Brooklyn Bridge Park, connection to the water is critical. This is one of the only places in New York where a park visitor can have direct contact with the bodies of water that surround the city. In various instances, park goers are encouraged to see, touch, and engage with water. The spirit of this, as well as BBP's educational approach to water, is appreciated by many Pool Talks participants who showed interest in ways to incorporate unique water features into the pool space. Evidently, 35% of survey respondents report interest in a kid splash feature. However, that interest must be balanced with those at Community Conversations that focused on the many playgrounds close by to Squibb Park and were concerned that children-only spaces might feel exclusive.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*Kids splash features are loved by both kids and adults.*





# INCLUDE SHADE IN & AROUND THE POOL

During summer 2018, New York City had 18 days with temperatures over 90 degrees, so it should be no surprise that community members consider shade as a critical element for the new pool. During the Community Conversations, participants expressed interest in shaded areas for swimmers and people in the space surrounding the pool.

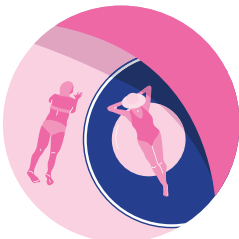
Community members recommended shade structures, such as awnings and tarps, as a way to offer coverage to large groups of people and enhance the architectural design of the space. They also discussed the possibility of combining permanent shade structures with movable umbrellas to create greater flexibility. Additionally, participants discussed the inclusion of natural shade, but were conscious of the potential for falling leaves to affect the cleanliness of the pool. Another important consideration discussed was the attractiveness of the shade structures for residents whose view looks onto Squibb Park, described in more detail on page 14.

## WHAT WE HEARD

80%

of survey respondents report that shade is essential to their pool experience.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Consider that shade is needed for both swimmers as well as those spending time outside the pool.
- Balance permanent shade with movable options that can easily withstand wind.
- Design shade to be aesthetically cohesive with the overall design and consider how it looks outside of Squibb Park as much as from within.
- Incorporate the existing landscape design of Brooklyn Bridge Park into natural shade choices.
- Strategically locate natural shade to avoid maintenance issues.

# DESIGN FLEXIBLE & DIVERSE SEATING

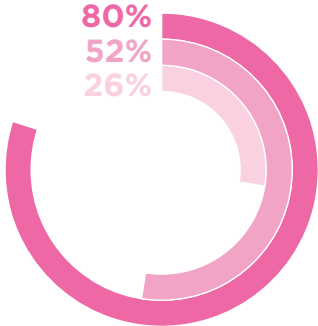
Community members expressed that seating areas are an essential space for people to relax and socialize during their pool-going experience. It is also an important amenity for those accompanying swimmers to the pool but are not going into the water themselves. In the survey comments and at Community Conversations, participants showed interest in seating options that were varied and flexible, allowing for different audiences, such as larger groups, individuals, or families, to occupy the space in ways that suit them best.

In addition, an important finding was the need for clear sight lines between the pool and the seating areas, to allow for parents and caregivers to watch children and for swimmers to keep an eye on their belongings.

In surveys conducted at the Pop-Up Pool, respondents shared that the beach was an “unexpected success.” It became a lively place for people to play and socialize and added to the overall Pop-Up Pool experience. Despite this, participants were cautious towards including a beach at the new pool because of negative impact on keeping showers clean, its limited use during the off-season, and because there is already a beach area at Brooklyn Bridge Park.

## WHAT WE HEARD

Pool Talks participants drew direct links between seating design and the new pool’s ability to support socializing. This is reflected in survey data, which shows that 80% of people attend public pools with others.



- ATTEND WITH OTHERS
- ATTEND WITH FAMILY/PARTNER
- ATTEND WITH FRIENDS

*I like the idea of having multiple and flexible seating options.* ”

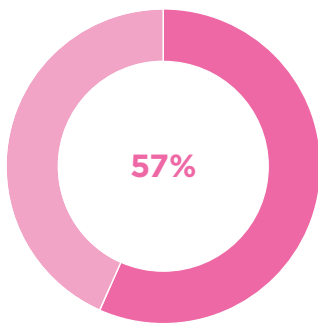
## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



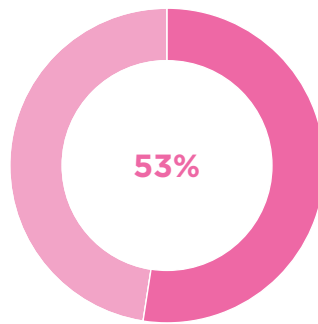
- Provide modular and movable seating to offer pool goers multiple options and allow for the space to scale up or down as necessary.
- Design terraced or amphitheater-style seating to accentuate the view, provide strong sight lines to the pool, and allow people to watch pool sports.
- Choose materials for seating areas that reflect the design of the rest of Brooklyn Bridge Park, for example, by using the turf material found on Pier 2.

## PREFERENCES

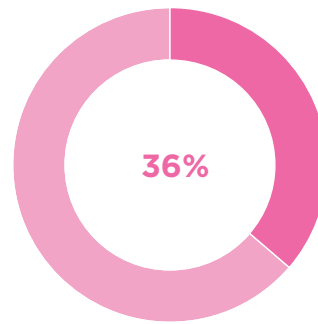
Survey respondents interest in seating options ranged from seating to watch activities, to a beach with lounge chairs, to picnic tables. The following shows the percentage of participants who agreed that the following types of seating is essential.



SEATING AREAS TO WATCH ACTIVITIES



BEACH WITH LOUNGE CHAIRS



PICNIC TABLES

# OFF-SEASON

*I love the idea of using the area and amenity year-round.*

”

*A year-round pool would provide more options for swimming lessons during the winter.*

”

# INTEREST IS STRONG TO SWIM YEAR-ROUND

Typically, swimming is considered a summer-only activity. Most New York City public pools are busy during June, July, and August, and then shut down for the off-season. Thus, the prospect of swimming year-round at the new pool was very exciting for participants. Not only did 78% of survey respondents express interest in a year-round swimming experience at Squibb Park, but comments supporting an off-season pool appeared over 150 times between the survey and Community Conversations.

It was clear that many community members see a year-round pool as a valuable and efficient utilization of the space during colder months. They also shared excitement that it would open up new opportunities for different kinds of uses and programming throughout the school year. Community members did not come to a consensus on the type of year-round swimming pool, in terms of whether it should have a temporary or permanent cover, but they are very interested for the pool design to explore such options.

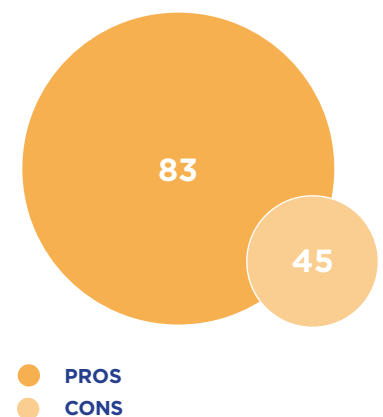
Despite this strong interest, community members expressed concerns that year-round swimming would mean that the pool's impact on the surrounding neighborhood would be year-round too. Some notable issues include crowding and traffic during the off-season. Additionally, many were apprehensive about the increase in costs to construct and manage a year-round pool, which they felt could delay the timeline of the project.

## WHAT WE HEARD

# 78%

of survey respondents report that they would be likely or extremely likely to come to a covered pool during the off-season.

Participants at the Community Conversation were asked to provide the “pros” and “cons” of a covered pool at Squibb Park. The results were 65% pros and 35% cons.



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- If designing a cover for the pool, make it retractable or use transparent materials to ensure that it does not obstruct sunshine during the summer months.
- Collaborate with nearby schools to offer swimming lessons and after-school programming during the off-season.
- Design high-quality bathroom and changing facilities that are large enough to accommodate additional use during colder months.

## PREFERENCES

Of survey respondents, 78% said that they are likely or extremely likely to come to an off-season pool; 82% of people who have been a NYC pool in the past agreed.



# OFF-SEASON USES MUST BE JUST AS ENTICING

In the case that it is not possible for BBP to provide year-round swimming at Squibb Park, community members are interested in a variety of alternative ways to utilize the space. While the research did not point to a general agreement on any specific alternatives, community members leaned towards suggestions that added to the existing amenities and programming of Brooklyn Bridge Park, rather than replicating them. Popular ideas captured in the survey include off-season markets, performances, and public art space.

In addition to the options provided in the survey, community members suggested over 20 types of uses, programming, and amenities. The following are the most popular off-season ideas, in order of preference:

- Ice rink
- Arts and culture installations and events including music performances, galleries, movie events and literary events
- A market event, including flea markets, holiday markets and farmers markets
- Exercise activities such as fitness classes, organized sports leagues, and sports facilities
- An open and unprogrammed space
- A play space/playground
- Skate park

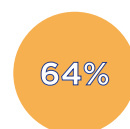
Some community members expressed disappointment in losing the current use of Squibb Park, which many explained is an ideal place to teach children to bike and for kids to scooter safely, and therefore recommended that the space return to its original state during the off-season.

## WHAT WE HEARD

# 650

ideas for off-season uses for Squibb Park were provided in open-ended survey questions.

Survey respondents were asked about their interest level in a number of ways that Squibb Park could be activated during the off-season. The following percentage of people reported having interest in these activation ideas:



MARKET

50%

PERFORMANCE

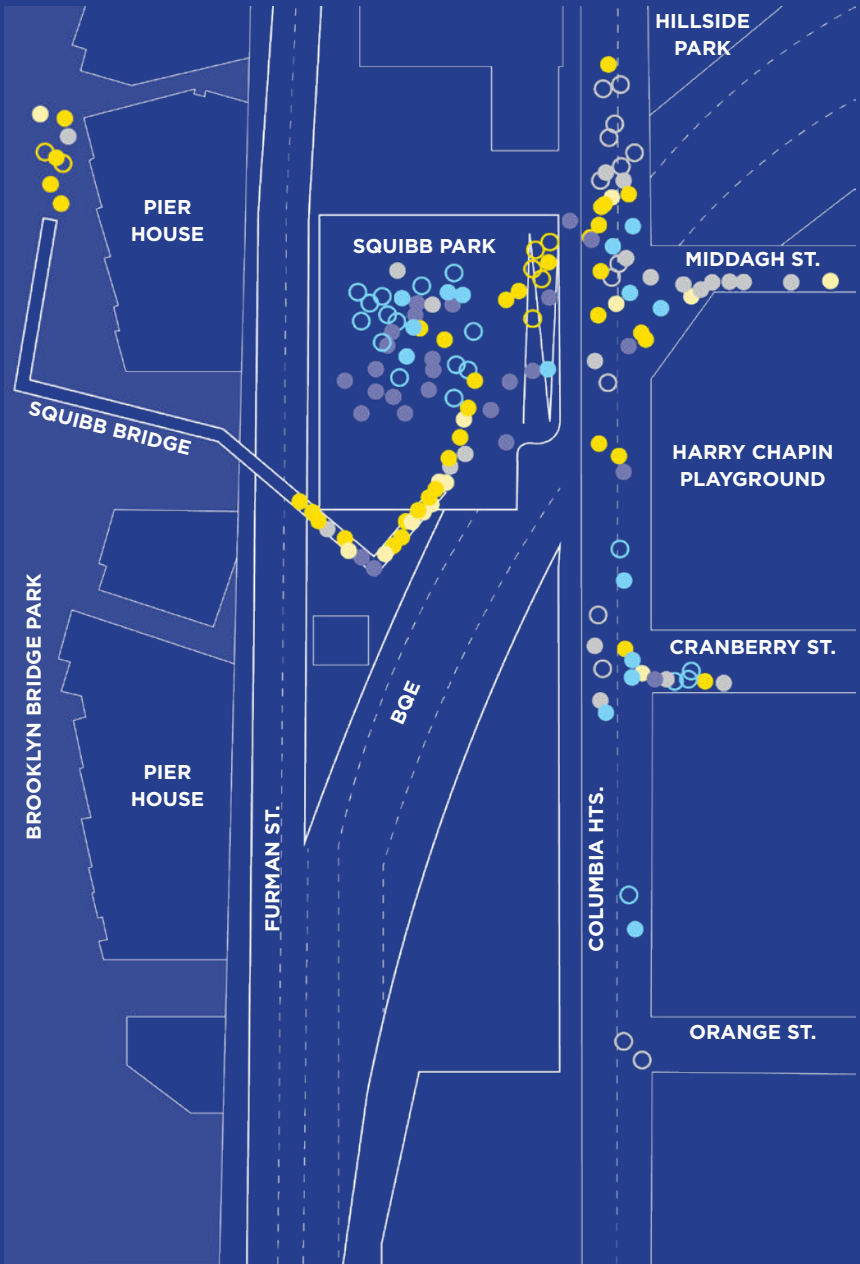
42%

PUBLIC ART

40%

RECREATIONAL CLASSES

# NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS



The location for the new pool is uniquely situated between the park, a residential complex, and the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. This locale raises a host of concerns regarding the pool's effects on the surrounding area, and the community wants the pool design and management to take them into account.

Some also raised concerns with the location for the pool. See information about the selection of the site on page 46.

During Pool Talks, participants voiced their neighborhood and site concerns in the survey and during mapping activities at workshops. All of the reported concerns have been categorized by type and coded by color, represented in the key below. Each concern and its respective location have been mapped.

- ACCESS AND EGRESS
- FLOW OF PEOPLE
- ACCESSIBILITY
- PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC
- VEHICULAR TRAFFIC
- CROWDING
- SAFETY
- NOISE



# ACCESS TO & THROUGH SQUIBB PARK

*It's critical to always be able to pass through Squibb Park regardless of the programming going on or the season.*

”

*We need a shortcut for those not interested in the pool.*

”

# REDESIGN THE ENTRANCE TO SQUIBB

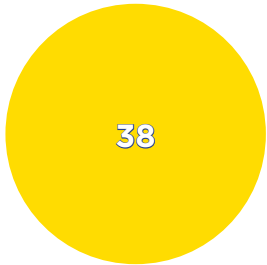
With the addition of the new pool, there is no question that the entranceways to Squibb Park will become more heavily utilized. The current conditions of Squibb Park do not account for this influx of people, especially the access point on Columbia Heights. Additionally, many community members expressed the accessibility problems with the existing ramp. Even though the ramp was regraded in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with disabilities as well as senior citizens find it overly challenging to manage. Community members recommend that the pool design explore how to address these concerns to ensure that the entrance to Squibb Park is safe and accessible for all.

*The space must be accessible to senior citizens. A ramp might be challenging if it's too steep, especially during the winter.*

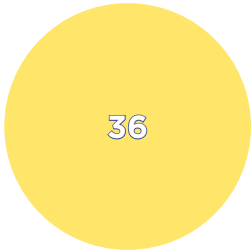


## WHAT WE HEARD

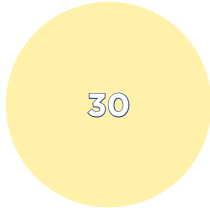
Concerns relating to accessibility issues, pedestrian flow, and capacity were repeated throughout the workshop and in surveys. The following represents the number of times that concerns related to each topic appeared.



CAPACITY OF THE SITE



ACCESS



PEDESTRIAN FLOW

# INCREASE CAPACITY FOR PEDESTRIAN FLOW

At present, the entrance to Squibb Park from Brooklyn Heights is built to accommodate a relatively slow stream of traffic. Many community members are concerned that the current design of the Columbia Heights entrance will not be able to accommodate the number of people that will be entering Squibb Park once the pool is open. Between people using the site to access Squibb Bridge and those heading to the pool, the Columbia Heights entranceway needs to be designed to mitigate bottlenecks and allow for people to enter the space easily.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*The entrance to the park should be something grand and that can accommodate many people.*



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Design a bypass system for Squibb Bridge users not entering the pool by separating tracks or creating express lanes.
- Design alternative entrances for pool users versus park users.
- Create a direct connection, such as a bridge extension, between Squibb Bridge and the Columbia Heights entrance.

# PLAN FOR PEOPLE PASSING THROUGH

Even though Squibb Park is not as heavily trafficked or utilized as other areas in Brooklyn Bridge Park, it is currently an important connection point for people moving between Brooklyn Bridge Park and Brooklyn Heights. For some residents of Pierhouse, this path is used multiple times a day.

Several community members expressed significant concern that the addition of the new pool could compromise their use of Squibb Bridge. They worried about their ability to navigate through the site if it becomes crowded by pool users and people waiting in line. This could be a major disruption to many people's daily commute.

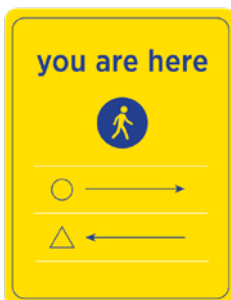
Community members recommend that the design of the pool consider pedestrian movement through Squibb Park in addition to movement to it. A key suggestion involved using wayfinding to help people move through the space as seamlessly as possible.

## WHAT WE HEARD

# 18%

of the 400 survey comments that expressed concerns were about issues of access and egress.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Explore a direct connection between Squibb Bridge and Columbia Heights.
- Use wayfinding, signage, and other navigation tools to direct people within and through Squibb Park.
- Consider locating the pool along the wall on Furman Street to give more room for pedestrian flow.

# DESIGN FOR THE POOL WAITING EXPERIENCE

If the Pop-Up Pool was any indication, then it is clear that the new pool will be a popular destination. 46% of survey respondents reported that they have been to the Pop-Up Pool. With this comes the reality that there may be long lines and wait times to enter the new pool.

Many community members expressed concerns about the following scenarios: waiting lines extending along Columbia Heights and crowding the neighborhood, lines taking over Squibb Bridge and rendering it ineffective for other users, and lines impeding the overall flow of movement throughout the space.

Based on these concerns, the community strongly recommends that Squibb Bridge not be a waiting area. As a solution, they suggested the pool design incorporate a waiting experience that mitigates potential crowding and supports the movement of people between Brooklyn Heights and the park.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*We should remember that people will be congregating around the pool who are waiting or not using the pool; you want to keep circulation moving.*



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Implement an online reservation system to reduce the number of people waiting at or near Squibb Park.
- Continue to use the wristband system that was implemented at the Pop-Up Pool, in combination with a designated waiting area.
- Include a designated waiting area along with a kiosk to pick up wristbands outside of Squibb Park, preferably within Brooklyn Bridge Park.
- Create a designated waiting area in Squibb Park that deters people from waiting on Squibb Bridge or on Columbia Heights.

# SURROUNDING IMPACT

*As a longtime resident of the neighborhood, I love the park and its amenities. However, it does get so crowded that in some ways, we have lost a bit of our neighborhood feel.* ”

*Let's encourage people to take public transportation to the pool.* ”

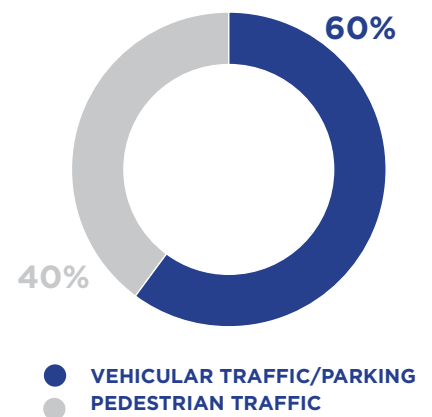
# USE WAYFINDING TO GUIDE PEOPLE

Brooklyn Bridge Park sees five million visitors over the course of a summer. With the advent of this new public resource, many community members expressed strong concerns that the new pool will bring an increase of pedestrian and vehicular traffic to the streets surrounding Squibb Park. For example, 34% of survey respondents reported that increased pedestrian traffic is a potential problem. Considering that the streets near the pool are narrow and have limited capacity, more traffic could compromise safety, especially for young kids who may not be savvy at navigating congested streets. Community members want the pool design and operations to help pool goers and residents move efficiently and safely through the area outside of Squibb Park.

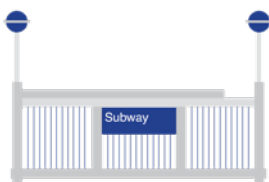
The community expressed interest in BBP developing a communications strategy, including a wayfinding system, that supports the flow of traffic on the street and proactively addresses potential issues of congestion. Participants discussed the need for implementing wayfinding at the pool space, in Brooklyn Heights, and at Brooklyn Bridge Park. By encouraging people to travel to Squibb Park in strategic ways and direct drop-offs and delivery trucks looking to access the pool, problems of congestion, noise, and safety can be mitigated.

## WHAT WE HEARD

Among the concerns related to traffic reported in survey comments and at community workshops, 40% were concerns about pedestrian traffic and 60% were concerns about vehicular traffic and parking.



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Use signage to encourage pool goers to access the pool via the park entrance at the base of Squibb Bridge instead of entering through the Columbia Heights entrance.
- Communicate clear paths from public transportation stations to the pool to streamline pedestrian flow.
- Encourage pool goers to travel on commercial corridors rather than on residential streets. This could support local businesses as well.

# CONVEY LIMITATIONS & PROVIDE NEW OPTIONS

Parking in New York City can be challenging, no matter the neighborhood. Parking next to a very popular public destination, such as Brooklyn Bridge Park, can be even harder. The issue of parking near Squibb Park came up often in both survey comments and during Community Conversations. In both instances, participants noted the limited parking available surrounding the new pool. Neighbors of Squibb Park are not only concerned about the lack of parking spaces, but also about the increase in congestion that could come with cars circling the block in search of parking.

The community recommends that as part of a communication plan for the new pool, BBP is proactive and considers ways to warn people about the lack of parking spaces and give instruction about alternatives.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*Columbia Heights is narrow, with very little room for a car to drop someone off – it'll hold up traffic.*



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Develop a communication strategy (on the ground and online) that encourages the use of public transportation to travel to the pool.
- Use signage to indicate existing parking options at Pier 6, Pier 2, and Pierhouse.



# SHIFT MEANS TO ENTER THE POOL

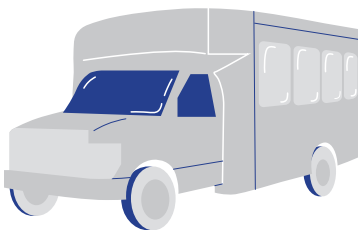
Community members suggested using alternative means of entry to the pool as a solution for addressing increased car and foot traffic on the streets surrounding Squibb Park. By designing ways for pool goers to access Squibb Park that avoid the Columbia Heights entrance, the area of Brooklyn Heights surrounding the new pool could remain less congested.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*I'm concerned about the movement of so many people on the vary narrow street we have here.*



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



- Designate a drop-off point for car-sharing services that is strategically located to avoid high traffic near the Columbia Heights entrance. In addition, develop a system to limit the amount of time a driver can idle.
- Introduce a Brooklyn Bridge Park shuttle bus that drops pool goers off at the park entrance to Squibb Bridge. The shuttle bus could connect to subway stations, parking lots, and key congestion points.
- Work with the NYC Department of Transportation to restrict car traffic during certain hours for pedestrian- and bicycle-only use.
- Work with the NYC Department of Transportation and other city agencies to add new parking options in the area or eliminate parking to disincentivize drivers.

# WHAT'S NEXT

Collectively, the community priorities represent the most pressing ideas, concerns, and aspirations for the new public pool at Squibb Park. From the shape and feel of the space, to the activities that happen there, to the impact it has on the surrounding neighborhood, the design considerations put forth by Pool Talks participants reflect the diversity and enthusiasm of the Brooklyn Bridge Park community.

Using this report, BBP will take the next step in the planning process by translating the findings into a set of design guidelines that architects can use to inform their proposal submissions for the new pool. In addition to the physical design, many recommendations about programming, management, operations, and the surrounding area will inform BBP and Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy on all decisions that impact the pool.

After the design submission period has ended, individuals who participated in Pool Talks and the broader BBP community will have a chance to provide feedback on the leading proposals. Once the winning design has been selected and plans are finalized, BBP will share the construction details and timeline to the public. Finally, these steps will culminate in a permanent pool in Brooklyn Bridge Park. Timelines have not yet been finalized for the project.

Please check Brooklyn Bridge Park's website for updates on this process and opportunities for you to continue to share your feedback.

**Your participation is crucial for creating a unique pool that will be enjoyed for years to come.**

The following shows BBP's process for planning, designing, and constructing the new pool. Beyond the engagement to date, there will be upcoming opportunities for the public to contribute to the process, represented by the yellow circles.





# Thank You

We extend our gratitude to all who participated in Pool Talks. Whether you offered your time and energy by filling out a survey, attending the Community Conversations, participating in Community Census, or being interviewed, your insights will go a long way in supporting BBP to build a pool that reflects the needs and interests of its community.

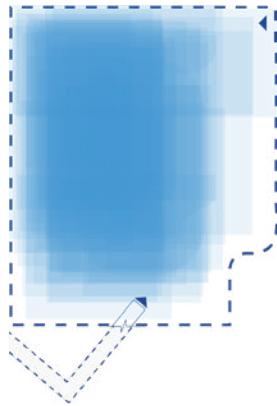
**We look forward to seeing you at the pool!**



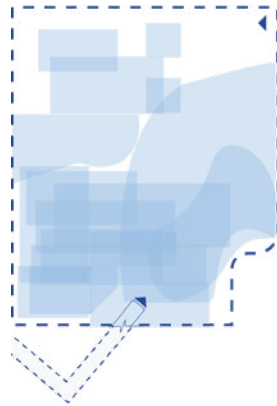
# APPENDIX

# Community Pool Plans

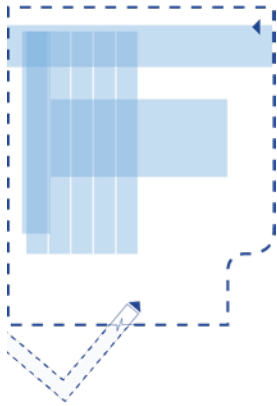
SHALLOW POOL



POOL AREA



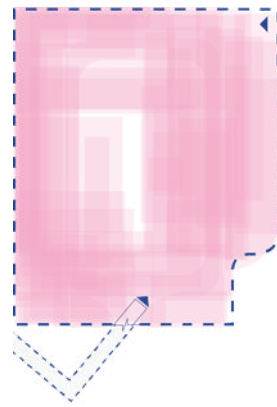
LAP POOL



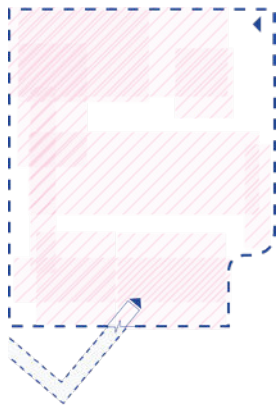
FOOD CONCESSIONS



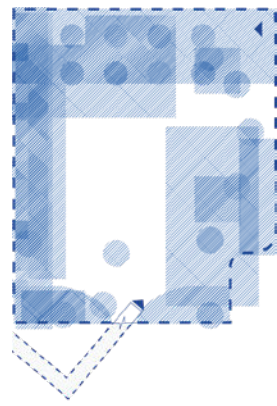
SEATING AREAS



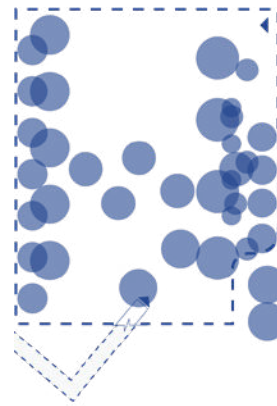
BEACH AREAS



BATHROOMS



LANDSCAPING



SHADE



Workshop participants were asked to draw their ideal pools. The results were 52 drawings that show a variety of preferences in regards to layout, scale, and adjacencies. In this diagram, their drawings have been combined and categorized by pool type and non-swimming amenities.

By synthesizing the participants' ideal blueprints for the space, common preferences and considerations are exposed. In general, community members tended to maximize swimming areas and divide the pool by type. The plans also show that while people were keen to prioritize the pool in the site, non-swimming amenities were important too. For instance, people commonly included seating areas surrounding the pool and drew food concessions along the edges of the site.

While the drawings do not point to an overall consensus, they illustrate a variety of potential pool layouts.

# Why Squibb Park

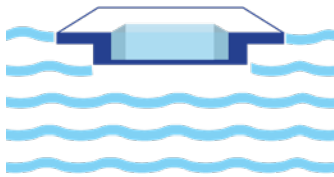
In the early stages of the pool project, BBP analyzed a number of locations for the new pool. They devised a set of criteria to judge each site in order to select the best location. Some of the top criteria were accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and capacity, which needs to exceed the 60-person Pop-Up Pool because its capacity did not match the scale and interest level of the rest of the park.

BBP considered several options for the new pool: a floating pool in the river, on a pier, in the uplands, outside the park, and Squibb Park. The following describes the assessment of each location based on the criteria.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

BBP used the following criteria to evaluate potential sites for the new pool:

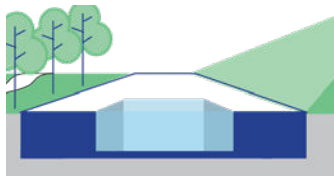
<b>Feasibility</b>	The cost to construct and operate a pool at the site.
<b>Use</b>	The current or planned uses of the site.
<b>Access and Flow Patterns</b>	The proximity and transportation connections of the site to Brooklyn Bridge Park.
<b>Operation</b>	The control and ownership of the site.
<b>Size</b>	The ability for the site to fit a pool with a capacity for 150-300 people.



## FLOATING POOL

---

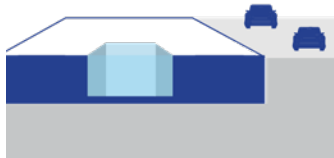
BBP found a number of detracting qualities related to a floating pool. It would be very expensive to construct and operate, and the impact its shade might have on marine life would need to meet environmental regulations, requiring an intensive approval process by the Department of Environment Conservation.



## POOL IN UPLANDS

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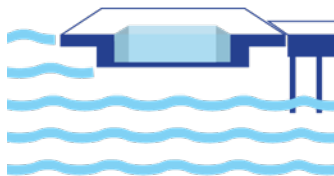
BBP looked into placing a pool in the uplands, but found several issues. Mainly, none of the park's uplands provide enough space to accommodate a larger pool. This is because of their, which includes both a greenway for pedestrians and bicycles and a sound-attenuating berm, run throughout the Park.



## POOL OUTSIDE PARK

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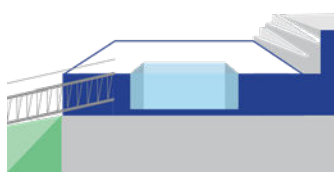
BBP does not own or manage property outside of the park, so locating the pool in a new location would make it difficult for BBP to control and manage the space.



## POOL ON A PIER

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In considering the placement of a pool on one of the piers, BBP found issues around feasibility and use. Due to weight restrictions, new piles would need to be built and installed in the river in order to support the pool, which would be expensive, laborious, and potentially harmful to marine life. Additionally, architects would need to bring utilities to the pier for bathroom and shower facilities (only Pier 2 is equipped with water utilities and it is heavily used), which would add significant costs. Also, this option would mean removing a current park amenity.



## POOL AT SQUIBB PARK

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Compared to the other considered locations, Squibb Park reflected well against the criteria. In terms of feasibility, BBP found that construction of the pool would fit into their estimated budget, in part, because water, sewer, and electric utilities are already present at the site. In regards to use, Squibb Park tends to be empty for large periods of time and there is an opportunity to activate the space more fully. BBP also concluded that its adjacency to the park and connection via Squibb Bridge is optimal for easy access. In terms of operation, the Parks Department, who owns the site, has expressed interest for BBP to create a pool there. And finally, the site is an adequate size to accommodate a pool with a 150-300-person capacity. Considering these factors, BBP officially chose Squibb Park as the site for the new pool.

Pool Talks was made possible because of the participation of Brooklyn Bridge Park staff, community-based organizations, neighborhood residents and park users from across New York City. We would like to thank all who shared their experience and energy to shape the priorities for the new pool.



## ABOUT BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK

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Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation, known as Brooklyn Bridge Park (BBP), is the not-for-profit entity responsible for the planning, construction, maintenance, and operation of Brooklyn Bridge Park, an 85-acre sustainable waterfront park spanning 1.3 miles along Brooklyn's East River shoreline. As steward of the park, BBP has transformed this previously deteriorated stretch of waterfront into a world-class park where the public can gather, play, relax and enjoy sweeping views of New York Harbor. The self-sustaining park was designed by the award-winning firm of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. and features expansive lawns, rolling hills, waterfront promenades, innovative playgrounds, a greenway, sports facilities and the popular Jane's Carousel. BBP serves thousands of people on any given seasonal day, who come to picnic, walk their dog, play soccer, jog, bike or roller skate. Brooklyn Bridge Park is a signature public investment for the 21st Century and will be an enduring legacy for the communities, elected officials and public servants who made it happen.



## ABOUT BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK CONSERVANCY

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Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy has worked for over 30 years to bring Brooklyn Bridge Park to life. We started out as grassroots advocates, bringing together residents, government, and local supporters to transform an abandoned waterfront into the park you see today. Now an essential supporter, the Conservancy works in partnership with Brooklyn Bridge Park to ensure that the Park reaches its full potential as a dynamic and vibrant public space for all of Brooklyn, New York City, and beyond. With your help, the Conservancy produces diverse and innovative programming for park visitors and cultivates volunteer and philanthropic support of this special place on the Brooklyn waterfront. Since 2000, more than 1,600,000 visitors have enjoyed the Conservancy's free, public programs in Brooklyn Bridge Park.



## ABOUT TYTHEDESIGN

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TYTHEdesign is a capacity-building firm that uses the lens of design and strategy to support organizations doing good in their communities. By taking a human-centered approach, we help organizations connect with their stakeholders, drive innovation internally, enhance new and existing services, and share their story. Ultimately, our mission is to deepen existing skills and strengthen the impact of the social sector.  
[tythe-design.com](http://tythe-design.com)

**We invite you to continue to be part of the Pool Talks conversation!** Please check the Brooklyn Bridge Park website for updates on this process and opportunities for you to continue to share your feedback. [brooklynbridgepark.org](http://brooklynbridgepark.org)