

# The High Bridge

## PlaNYC Survey Results



### Capital Project

Thanks to Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) is developing plans to reopen the High Bridge, one of the city's oldest standing bridges. The bridge spans the Harlem River, connecting Manhattan and the Bronx, and has been closed for over 30 years. The \$60 million allocated to the High Bridge through PlaNYC, along with an additional \$5 million from Congressman José Serrano, will allow the DPR to rehabilitate and reopen the bridge. The reopened High Bridge will be an essential link in New York City's expanding waterfront Greenway, and will create new pedestrian and bicycle access to the Highbridge parks, pool and recreation center, and to the Bronx and Manhattan for residents of both boroughs. The rehabilitation will follow historic preservation principles to restore the architectural details of this landmarked structure for public enjoyment.

### Surveying Methodology

Partnerships for Parks, a joint program City Parks Foundation and DPR, led the development of the High Bridge survey, working with DPR and design consultants hired to prepare plans for the site. Surveys were designed to collect information about current and projected use patterns, in order to shape the scope of the project based on available funding. 578 surveys were collected in July and August 2007 by volunteers and staff from Alianza Dominicana, DPR, the High Bridge Coalition, the Highbridge Community Life Center, and Partnerships for Parks. 34% of the surveys were collected in-person at Highbridge Park in the Bronx and Highbridge Park in Manhattan, at different times and days of the week; 60% of the surveys were collected online via the DPR website; and 6% were mailed.<sup>1</sup>

### Survey Respondents

*28% of respondents are interested in participating in future meetings about the reopening of the High Bridge, and 20% of respondents are interested in volunteering in one or both of the Highbridge parks.*

46% of survey respondents live in Manhattan, 27% live in the Bronx, 8% live in Brooklyn, 3% live in Queens, and 15% either live outside New York City or did not identify their place of residence. 4% of respondents filled out the survey in Spanish, and 25% of respondents indicated that they have children under 18 at home.

### Travel to the Park

- Bronx residents and residents of Manhattan neighborhoods adjacent to the park are less likely to bike across the bridge, and residents of non-adjacent Manhattan neighborhoods and other boroughs are more likely to bike.
- Adults are more likely to bike than youth.
- Respondents who filled out the Spanish-language survey are more likely to bike across the bridge.

How will you travel across the bridge?	
Bike	36%
Walk	32%
Both	30%
None	2%

## Bridge reopening and features

Survey respondents were asked to rate their priorities for the reopening of the bridge and for potential bridge features. The following tables list the percent of respondents who ranked choices as “important” or “very important.”

What is most important to you in the reopening of the bridge?	
Clear and accessible paths to the bridge	87%
Easy access from roads/public transportation	80%
Feeling of safety	80%
Bridge open during commuting hours	69%
Overall attractiveness of bridge restoration	68%

What features would you most like to have once the bridge is reopened?	
Signs or maps	69%
Information about neighborhood destinations	58%
Seating/gathering space	56%
Regular tours of the bridge and water tower	47%
Nearby food and concessions	35%
Other: bikes lanes, late night access, and safety	17%

## Open-ended responses

254 of the 578 people surveyed responded to the open-ended questions. The following table shows the number of times each issue was mentioned. Because multiple answers were allowed, 358 comments appear.

Issues Brought Up in Open-Ended Responses	
Access, transportation and trail system issues	93
Security and lighting concerns	81
Restoration and historic preservation	69
Enhance park facilities and programs	35
Environmental conservation issues	26
Thank you/I love the High Bridge!	17
Concern about PlaNYC’s impact on local community	13
Preserve views, tasteful fences/enclosures	9
Fewer park facilities/improve other parks	7
Incorporate design elements from specific nearby parks	5
Increase food and cultural events	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>358</b>

*“Allow for both transportation/movement (biking, walking, running) and gathering (sitting, etc.) without either interfering with the other.”*

*“Have clear signs and physical links between the High Bridge and waterfront walking paths and parks along both sides of the Harlem River.”*

*“Path leading to the bridge is currently little used, quiet, and peaceful. Would like to keep the sheltering greenery and feeling of seclusion.”*

*“Please do not put standard cage [fencing] over bridge -- find a creative solution.”*

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

Special Places to Preserve or Enhance	
Historical preservation and interpretive signage for bridge, aqueduct, and water system	24
Improve connections to transportation and recreation infrastructure (Harlem River Drive, Greenway, trail systems, etc.)	19
Environmental preservation/conservation	13
Highbridge pool, recreation center facilities and programs	11
Water tower/tower tours	9
Preserve views/no obstructive fencing on bridge	7
Natural areas and staircase on Bronx side	7

*“It would be nice to have volunteer docents on the bridge from time to time to answer visitors' questions about the bridge's unusual history and its role in the water supply, and about the current water supply.”*

*“Continue the development of the mountain bike trails as a source of recreation and exercise.”*

*“The tower is really spectacular.”*

*“The problem that concerns me most is the safety of people in the park at night.”*

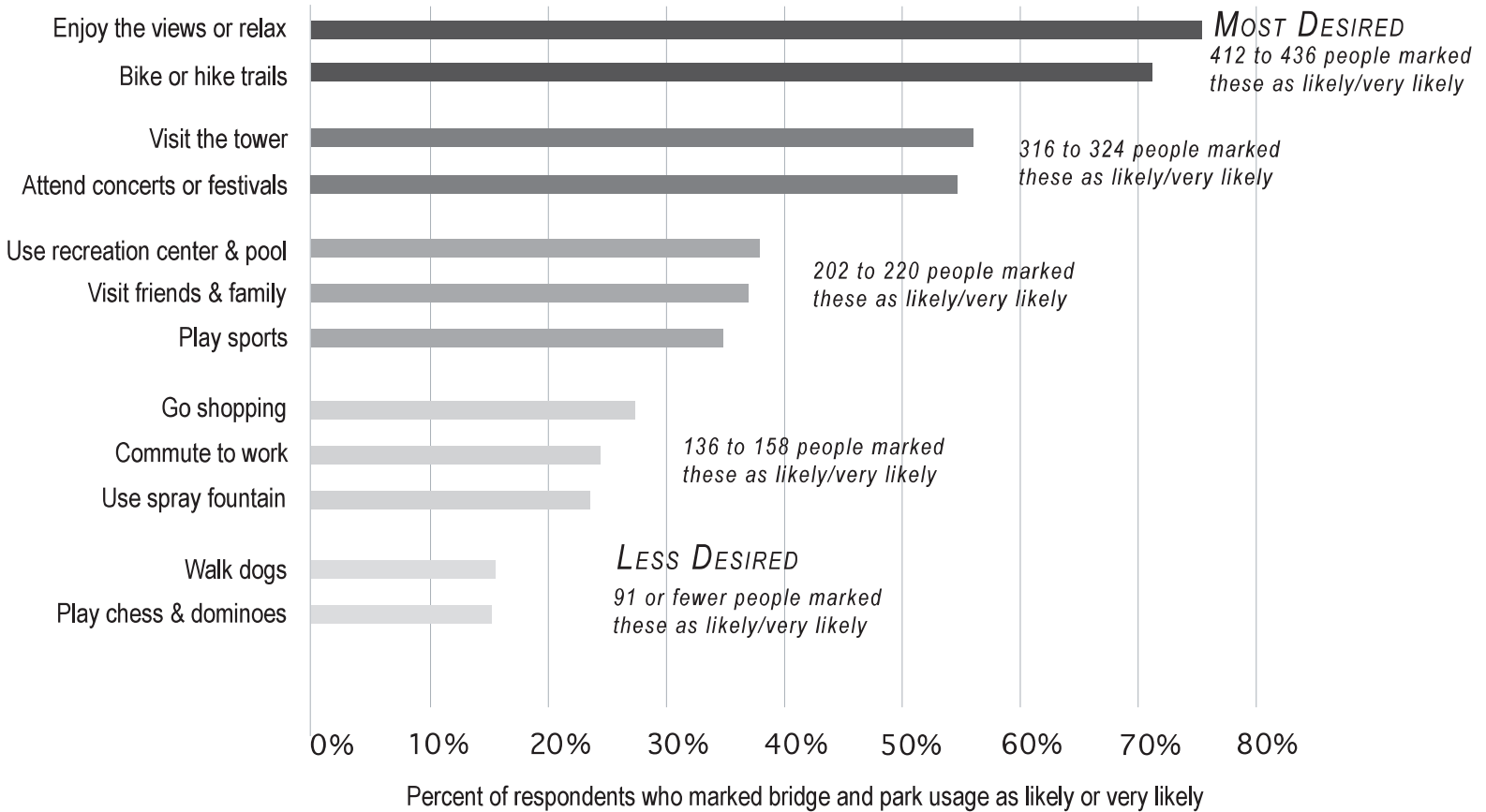
## See accompanying graphs for information regarding:

- *Anticipated uses of High Bridge and Highbridge Parks.*
- *Preferred time of day for using the High Bridge.*

<sup>i</sup> Because the survey did not use a random selection of the population, a margin of error cannot be computed for the data.

## High Bridge and Highbridge Parks

How likely will you be to use the bridge and parks in the following ways?



### Preferred Time of Day for Using the High Bridge

