



Testimony for City Council Hearing on December 1, 2016 at 1pm

Matt Malina, Director NYC H2O

Title of session: *An Examination of Parks Department Properties Currently Inaccessible to the Public*

I am the founder and director of NYC H2O, a non-profit organization that provides education programs about New York City's water system and ecology. Our biggest organizational growth comes from the increasing participation of underserved Title I and Title III New York City schools. Since 2014, we have provided 283 free Water Engineering and Ecology Field Trips reaching over 7,300 students. We engage students and the public with outdoor experiences at eight inspiring water ecology and infrastructure sites located **in city parks** in all five boroughs. We offer similar programs to family and adult audiences as well as provide volunteer beach-cleanups that engage New York City youth.

Three of our park sites have areas that are not currently accessible to the public. Opening these locations would add to the experience of these parks in meaningful and memorable ways.

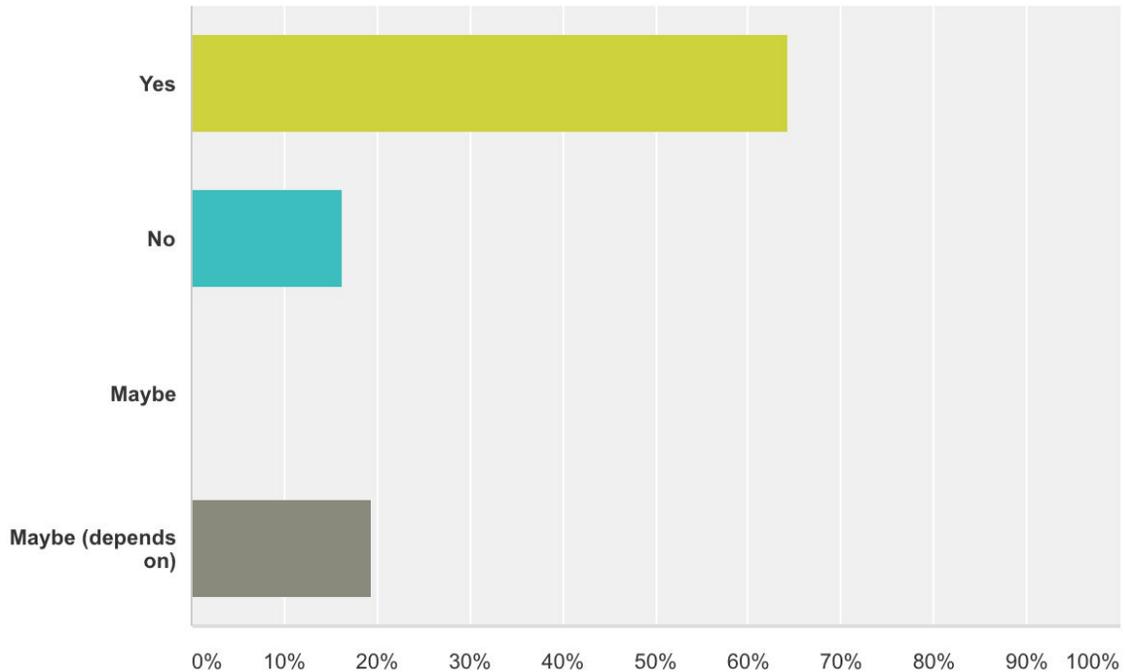
- Ridgewood Reservoir
- High Bridge Tower and Gatehouse
- Central Park Gatehouse (DEP)

The Ridgewood Reservoir in Highland Park is a 50+ acre natural oasis that straddles the **East New York** neighborhoods border of Brooklyn and Queens. Built in 1859 to supply the once independent City of Brooklyn with high quality water, it became obsolete with the addition of new reservoirs in the Catskills and was decommissioned in the 1980's. Since then, nature has taken its course in a perfect case study of ecological succession. A forest has grown in the two outside basins while the middle basin's freshwater pond is an avian stopover on the Atlantic Flyway.

We conducted a community survey of the Ridgewood Reservoir. **62% of respondents want an accessible boardwalk that descends into the basins to allow closer observation of this unique, magical landscape. The nearby residents want to have access to what is now a locked away ecological asset. This should be a priority for any Equity in the Parks initiatives.**

Would you like to see a handicapped-accessible boardwalk that descends into the basin to allow observing the forest and the pond more closely?

Answered: 165 Skipped: 142



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	64.24%	106
No	16.36%	27
Maybe	0.00%	0
Maybe (depends on)	19.39%	32

High Bridge

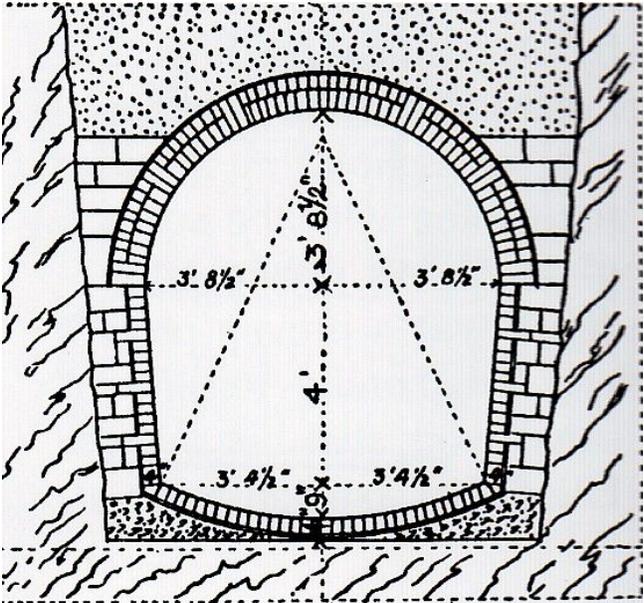
The High Bridge is NYC's oldest bridge and was built in 1848 to carry the Croton Aqueduct across the Harlem River. It was renovated skillfully and reopened to the public in June 2015. The gatehouses are safe and being able to go inside them with students and the public to see the Croton Aqueduct would be incredibly instructive to explain the function of the bridge. Students always ask if they can go inside the gatehouses of the High Bridge.

There is a huge demand for access to these two sites, as shown by the turnout of thousands of New Yorkers on the annual Open House NY weekend, when normally closed sites are opened for public tours. It is inspiring to be inside of NYC's oldest bridge and something that played such a key role in our city's growth.

Inside the Croton Aqueduct, photo by Steve Duncan

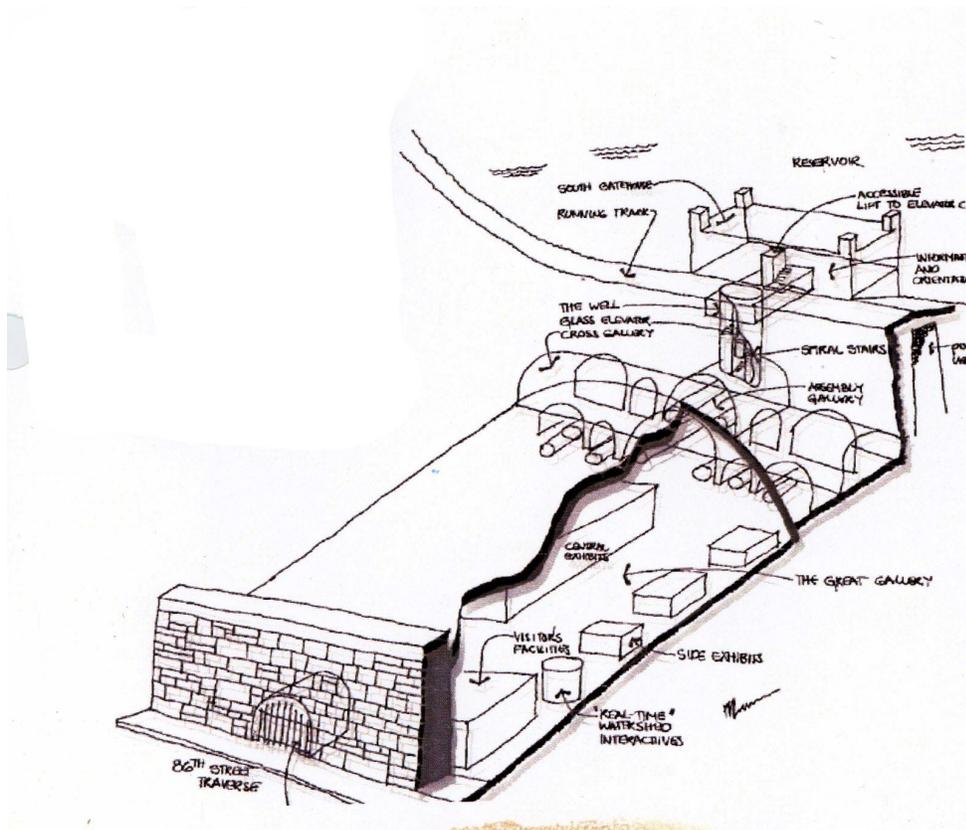


Engineering drawing of the Croton Aqueduct 1842, Fayette B. Tower



Central Park Gatehouse (DEP)

In 1997, there were plans drawn up to turn it into a museum about water and I have attached a schematic here. It would be an ideal location and setting for such a museum.



Source: DEP engineering study to reduce dry weather flow to Wards Island sewage plant conducted by Malcom-Pirnie in 1997