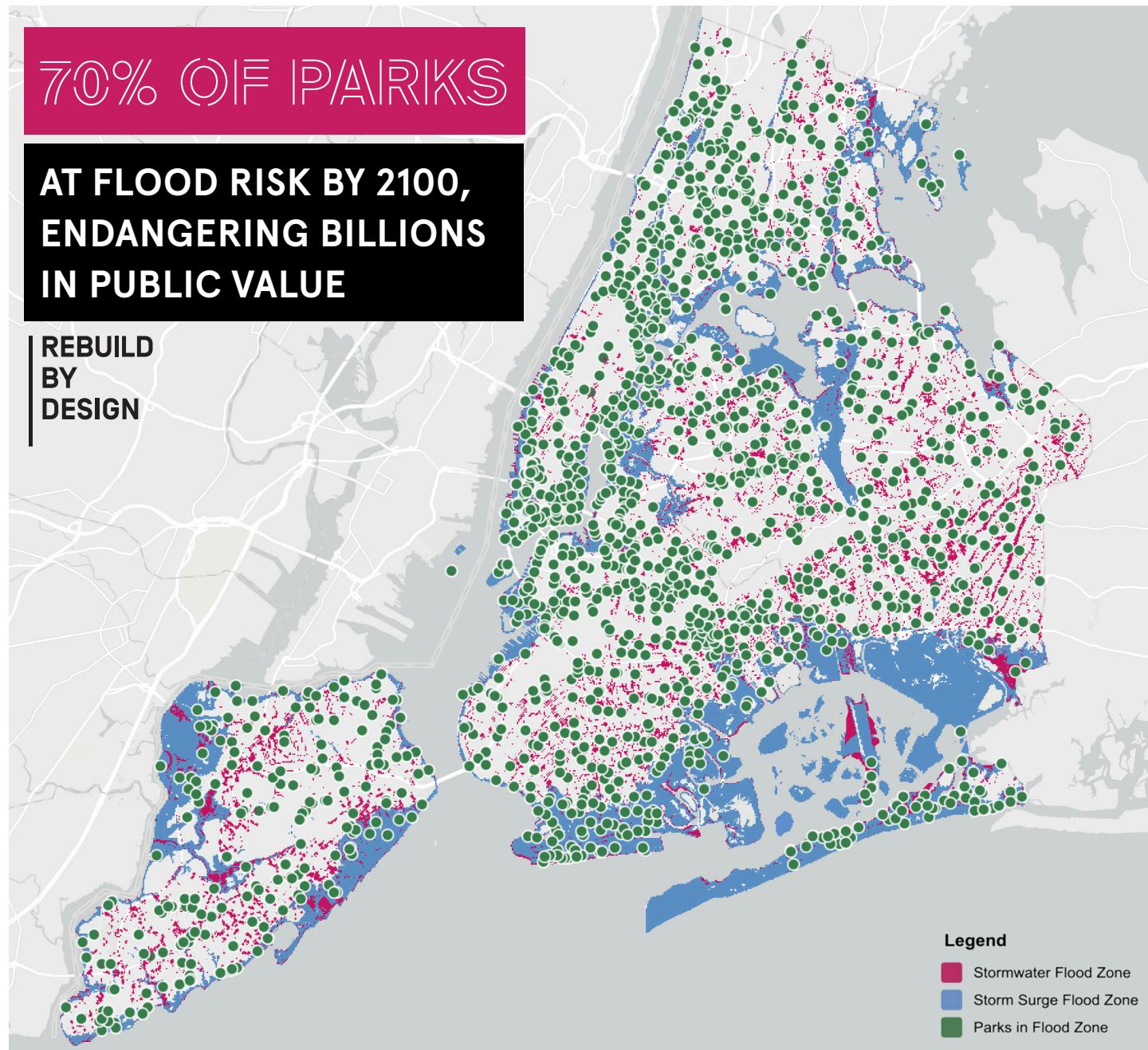


NYC PARKS ARE ESSENTIAL CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE

70% OF PARKS

AT FLOOD RISK BY 2100,
ENDANGERING BILLIONS
IN PUBLIC VALUE

REBUILD
BY
DESIGN



PARKS SAVE CITIES, PARKS SAVE LIVES. NYC Parks are more than recreational spaces, they are vital assets in our climate resilience strategy.

Nearly 70% of the city's 2,385 parks will be in flood zones by 2100 (up from 38% today), as aging drainage systems, rising sea levels, and extreme storms threaten public spaces and vulnerable communities.

It's time to recognize and invest in them as critical climate infrastructure that can save lives and communities from flooding and overheating.

Parks can pump and store stormwater that would end up in our streets and basements, underground, until sewers can process the excess.

The moment is now to reimagine urban parks as multifunctional climate adaptation tools.

This proactive approach would safeguard public health and property and position NYC as a leader in climate infrastructure solutions, unlocking new federal and state funding, aligning public investment with broader sustainability goals.

KEY FINDINGS

Flood Risk

- 70% of NYC parks in stormwater and storm surge flood zones by 2100, up from 38% today.
- Brooklyn parks will see steepest increase in flood zone coverage, jumping from 21% to 69% by 2100.
- Staten Island parks currently have highest flood exposure (56%), projected to approach 80% by 2100.

Social & Heat Vulnerability

- 40% of flood-prone parks in neighborhoods with high social vulnerability with fewer resources to recover from climate disasters.
- 33% of these parks also experience extreme heat, are hotspots for overlapping climate risks.

High-Priority Parks

- 177 NYC parks critical for climate resilience, located in current or future flood zones with extreme heat and high social vulnerability.
- Many lack essential upgrades, with outdated drainage systems and insufficient heat mitigation measures.

KEEPING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS DRY

NYC's neighborhood parks offer untapped potential for stormwater management systems, urban cooling, and community resilience hubs during extreme weather events.

Infrastructure upgrades would save lives, protect property, and deliver strong economic returns:

- **2:1 return on investment** possible from well-designed Blue-Green Infrastructure Network.
- **Every \$1 spent on flood resilience saves up to \$13,** by reducing damages and recovery costs.¹

NYC can prioritize park renovations in flood-prone and socially vulnerable areas by bundling maintenance dollars and drawing from state funding to counter decades of city budget disinvestment.

This will stimulate local economies, create jobs, and attract further public and private investment, enabling communities to thrive while delivering measurable returns in public safety, environmental sustainability, and quality of life for all New Yorkers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Expand Parks' Capacity to Manage Neighborhood Flooding: Integrate green and gray stormwater solutions into all park projects that capture, store, and safely release floodwater.

2

Properly Fund Parks Operations and Maintenance: Dedicate at least 1% of NYC's expense budget for parks, in keeping with minimum national standards— many cities invest a higher percentage in parks.

3

Adopt an Inter-Agency Funding Model for Climate Infrastructure: Coordinate with agencies like DEP, DOT, and FEMA to co-fund park projects that manage stormwater, reduce heat, support emergency response, and maintain green-gray infrastructure.

4

Invest in Public Realm Stormwater Retention and Detention: In areas where parks cannot manage stormwater or open space is limited, implement retention and detention solutions in streets, sidewalks, plazas, and schoolyards to increase stormwater capacity across the public realm.

5

Outfit Parks with Disaster Response and Recovery Staging: Design parks to support disaster response by including backup power, emergency supply storage, reliable wifi, and flexible community spaces that strengthen social resilience year-round and serve as resource hubs during extreme weather.

¹ <https://www.uschamber.com/security/the-preparedness-payoff-the-economic-benefits-of-investing-in-climate-resilience>