



## THE CITY OF NEW YORK INDEPENDENT BUDGET OFFICE

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### **VIA EMAIL**

Council Member Gale Brewer  
[gbrewer@council.nyc.gov](mailto:gbrewer@council.nyc.gov)

Dear Council Member Brewer,

At your request, the Independent Budget Office (IBO) estimated the cost to keep outdoor yards open to the public after school on weekdays and for full eight-hour days on weekends for those that are not already participating in Schoolyards to Playgrounds program (IBO previously estimated this cost [in 2022](#)). The Schoolyards to Playgrounds program is co-managed by the Department of Education, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Trust for Public Land and allows public access to playgrounds on weekends. IBO estimates that the daily cost of keeping playgrounds at 676 school buildings in 2024 open after school on a weekday would be up to \$91,000 per day and on a weekend would be roughly up to \$243,000 per day for the Department of Education. The increase in daily cost compared with IBO's previous estimate largely stems from changes to the prevailing wage schedule, described in more detail below.

There are 945 buildings that have outdoor yard(s) according to the Report on Physical Education Pursuant to Local Law 102 of 2015 released for the 2023-2024 school year. Of these, according to the program's most recent Schoolyards to Playgrounds program [dataset](#) on Open Data as of December 11, 2024, 268 are participating in the program and have an open outdoor yard when crossmatched to the Physical Education report. Additionally, one building on the Physical Education report did not have a physical address. This leaves a total of 676 buildings that have outdoor yards but are not part of the schoolyards to playgrounds program and therefore are not open to the public after school and on weekends. IBO assumes the cost to keep those playgrounds open on a weekend would be to pay a custodian for eight hours at a rate of \$44.95 (\$29.97/hour plus time and a half based on the [Prevailing Wage Schedule](#) beginning July 1, 2024). This rate assumes existing custodians will staff additional hours; rates may be lower if responsibilities are shared across staff so that time and a half rates are not necessary. For the estimate for after school on weekdays, IBO assumes the custodian would work an additional three hours to keep the playground open.

IBO additionally looked at the breakdown by borough and found that about 76% of buildings with outdoor yards that are currently not open outside of school hours are located in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.

Finally, IBO examined the average distance that students would need to travel to the nearest City park separately for schools with a yard and for schools without a yard. IBO found that for the 676 school buildings with a yard that are not currently open during non-school hours, students would need to travel

0.26 miles on average to the nearest park. For the 431 school buildings without an outdoor yard, students would need to travel on average 0.29 miles to the nearest park.

<b>School Buildings in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx Account for Three-Quarters of Those With Outdoor Yards That Are Currently Not Open to The Public During Non-School Hours</b>			
<b>Borough</b>	<b>Number of School Buildings</b>	<b>Share of School Buildings by Borough</b>	<b>Average Distance to Nearest Park (Miles)</b>
Manhattan	129	19%	0.14
Bronx	153	23%	0.24
Brooklyn	196	29%	0.25
Queens	162	24%	0.34
Staten Island	36	5%	0.49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>100%</b>	

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data

A breakdown by City Council district is also provided on the following page.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact me at [Chafee@ibo.nyc.gov](mailto:Chafee@ibo.nyc.gov) or Stephanie Kranes, who prepared this letter, at [sdkranes@ibo.nyc.gov](mailto:sdkranes@ibo.nyc.gov), with assistance from Sarah Sayavong.

Sincerely,



Louisa Chafee, Director

<b>School Buildings with Outdoor Yards Currently Not Open to the Public on Weekends by City Council District</b>		
<b>City Council District</b>	<b>Number of School Buildings</b>	<b>Average Distance to Nearest Park (Miles)</b>
1	15	0.13
2	14	0.15
3	10	0.19
4	5	0.2
5	10	0.19
6	13	0.14
7	12	0.14
8	30	0.16
9	20	0.12
10	13	0.12
11	20	0.18
12	14	0.42
13	13	0.4
14	13	0.11
15	26	0.16
16	17	0.17
17	26	0.25
18	11	0.32
19	11	0.61
20	5	0.19
21	14	0.22
22	6	0.27
23	21	0.5
24	14	0.29
25	8	0.3
26	15	0.44
27	8	0.46
28	11	0.37
29	11	0.34
30	10	0.29
31	17	0.29
32	9	0.31
33	9	0.22
34	18	0.23
35	12	0.19
36	18	0.25
37	18	0.23
38	15	0.23

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<b>School Buildings with Outdoor Yards Currently Not Open to the Public on Weekends by City Council District, continued</b>		
<b>City Council District</b>	<b>Number of School Buildings</b>	<b>Average Distance to Nearest Park (Miles)</b>
39	16	0.22
40	9	0.26
41	17	0.17
42	15	0.35
43	5	0.2
44	4	0.21
45	5	0.45
46	11	0.34
47	16	0.28
48	10	0.31
49	15	0.21
50	11	0.65
51	10	1.02
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>676</b>	
SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data		