

Strengthening downtown public spaces in our smaller communities

Received: 3rd December, 2018

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Abstract Today, downtowns large and small are facing the challenges of the new normal, especially a contraction in retail-drawn customer traffic. Vibrant parks and public spaces can fill the slack and help maintain and grow a downtown's pool of visitors. Too many of them in smaller communities focus just on being event venues, however, while failing to provide the simple amenities and programming that are essential to attracting users on non-event days. This paper suggests that properly located public spaces can successfully target and attract the daytime markets segments present in these smaller communities, if the appropriate and affordable programming and improvements are made.

Keywords: *downtowns, main streets, high streets, parks, public spaces, downtown workforce, seniors, parents with school age children, tourists*

INTRODUCTION

All too often, local leaders in smaller communities resist recommendations to create the vibrant parks and public spaces that are more critical than ever to the success of their downtowns. With retail's weakened ability to draw people to our town centres, attractive parks and public spaces can be a viable way to maintain and grow the flow of users that a downtown needs to support its vibrancy and economic health.

Usually, the pushback comes from folks who argue one or more of the following points:

1. They already have a public space, and nobody uses it. It is deadlier than a doornail, more of a town liability than an asset;
2. They are a small town and their market area has a small population,

so their downtown does not attract a lot of visitors who might use a public space;

3. Their municipalities have limited finances, so it is extremely difficult to build a new public space or to significantly improve an existing one. Insufficient financial resources also mean that it is problematic to properly maintain existing public spaces or to provide the staff needed to facilitate the use of potential attractions, eg ping pong tables, boules courts, etc.

This paper is premised on the belief that there are solutions to all the above problems and that by incorporating knowledge of them into the designs and management of small town public spaces, these spaces can be turned into successful and important downtown assets.

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Figure 1: Town greens/commons in smaller communities are usually attractive, but often bucolic and inert

Source: N. D. Milder

SETTING VIABLE ASPIRATIONS FOR USE LEVELS

At the outset, it is essential to establish realistic expectations. These small town spaces will never have the visitation levels of major urban public spaces whereby, for example, Bryant Park in New York can attract over 6m visits annually and its neighbour, Times Square, draws over 300,000 pedestrians per day. On the other hand, if meaningfully activated, on days when they are not serving as the venues for events, the small town parks and public spaces still can attract a significant number of visitors. Annual visitation levels for these small town venues of 100,000+ are certainly possible and counts as high as 300,000 per year have been achieved.¹

At most points in time during the weekday, the small town public spaces may have very few to no users (see Figure 1), but this also even happens in large urban parks that still appear well activated, eg the Overlook section of Forest Park in Kew Gardens, NY. At several times during the

day, however — eg lunchtime, after school, and 7.00am to 9.00am — a successful small town public space can have a good chance of attracting platoons of users, some of whom are there with different subgroups, while others visit alone. Altogether they may number no more than five or six people at a specific point in time, although their numbers on occasion can be substantially higher, eg 50 to 60.

Visitors attract more visitors

The presence of one small group of visitors helps attract other visitors, who may come at a later point in time. The existing visitors help validate in the eyes of passersby that the park has something worthwhile to see or do, encouraging them to visit as well. (This assumes the visitors' behaviour is orderly.)

There are unfortunately no studies that show how many users a public space needs to project an image of being active, popular and worthy of a visit. But it is

very likely that potential visitors make their own subjective judgments about visiting a park based substantially on who they see there and what they are doing.

Sparse small town and market area populations do not have to mean dead, inert and underutilised parks and public spaces if, on non-event days, those spaces attract several platoons of visitors at several times of the day.

TOO OFTEN, PUBLIC SPACES IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES FOCUS ON JUST ONE OF THREE NECESSARY FUNCTIONS

These venues can perform three important and essential functions:

- Provide visitors with a green refuge for resting and relaxing in peace and quiet;
- Provide infrastructure assets and programmes that stimulate visitors to engage in activities (ie to 'perform'), many of which also will entertain people watchers visiting the venue. Some examples of such assets are ping pong tables, boules courts, model boat ponds, 'reading rooms', carousel rides, ice rinks, chess tables, swings, spray pads, square dances, dance contests, etc.;
- To present events visitors can attend such as films, plays, concerts, lectures, dance displays, etc. Event attendees are almost always passive audiences.²

A primary focus on events limits a public space's potential magnetism

One of the major problems of underutilised small town public spaces is that their design and operation are focused on being an events venue (see Figure 2). Such a narrow focus, of course, means that the space was probably easier to design. Operational costs may also be minimised if the venue's events are produced and funded by non-municipal

organisations. Programming is offloaded. The probable low number of events, however, means that the venue will be inactive on the vast majority of days in any year. For example, even if the venue had a relatively robust schedule of events on 50 days, it still would have no events and be inactive on 84 per cent of the days in a year.

The critical need for appropriate seating and shade

Another major problem with many of the underutilised spaces is that they fail to provide the prime requisite for adequately performing the green refuge function: adequate seating and shade. If these spaces are to be sticky and keep visitors for any meaningful length of time, there simply must be comfortable seating for them. Tables and chairs, of course, also encourage visitors to eat their lunches and snacks in the public space. Food consumption and sale is a key to having a successful public space, no matter the size of the downtown or the community.

Too many small town public spaces lack such seating in adequately shaded areas. This occurs even some strong public spaces such as Mitchell Park in Greenport, NY and Central Park Plaza in Valparaiso, IN. (Happily, the situation in Valparaiso was corrected in the park's second phase of development.) On hot days, the lack of shade can strongly discourage visits from anyone who is not a sun worshipper. What has been most surprising is that even some well-known designers of public spaces have been among those failing to include anything approaching adequate shade in some of their project designs.

People need reasons to visit public spaces on non-event days

Those public spaces that provide infrastructure assets and programmes that



Figure 2: This 'pocket park' in a small town downtown in the state of New Jersey is the location for several downtown events, but it has little appropriate seating or shade and no opportunities for visitors to engage in any activities

Source: Google <https://www.google.com/maps/@40.7586428,-74.9784768,3a,60y,325h,90t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sGBCpq3kx9fEgUMEVdNyqvA!2e0!7i13312!8i6656>

stimulate visitors to engage in activities give people the strongest reasons to visit. They substantially widen the variety of things visitors can do. Many of these attractions are there all day and every day and they are not scheduled. These attractions also allow visitors to be active participants in the venue's activities, rather than being just passive audience members; however, public spaces in smaller communities often lack such attractions. They have event programming, but not what may be called infrastructure programming. If ping pong tables or chess tables were there, visitors might be stimulated to use them. Most often such attractions are not there reportedly because of a lack of financial resources to cover the costs of creating them as well

as the staffing costs needed to operate attractions such as carousels, ice rinks, reading room or bocce courts. One might suspect, however, that the designers of these public spaces and/or the people who now manage them never considered providing such attractions and were unaware of their power and importance. Rectifying this situation may be the best way to strengthen downtown public spaces in our smaller communities.

A GOOD LOCATION IS NECESSARY, BUT INSUFFICIENT FOR SUCCESS, AND, IMPORTANTLY, A LOCATION CAN BE IMPROVED

The location of a public space is extremely important for several reasons. Its visibility



Figure 3: Entrance to the Centre Street Alley in downtown Rutland, VT. This was a troubled public space because it was surrounded by buildings and had little visibility from surrounding streets. It has since undergone a major revamp

Source: N. D. Milder

to downtown visitors drawn by its other attractions — retailers, eateries, services, government offices, entertainment venues, etc. — will influence how many visitors it will attract. Also, as Olmsted proved long ago about Central Park, and as more recent researchers have proved about other successful parks, parks can have positive impacts on real estate values on proximate properties and boost the desirability of commercial spaces. Where a park is located will determine its potential impact. Far too many small and medium-sized downtowns have located public spaces where they are invisible to most downtown users and where they have a low potential for having significant positive economic impacts (see Figures 3 and 4). Instead, they should be located, if possible, in what otherwise would be considered as worthy development sites, those that already benefit from significant

flows of pedestrian and vehicle traffic and are proximate to other downtown assets.

Very importantly, a public space's location also will determine the pool of people who are its most likely users. In urban areas that pool is most easily defined by:

- The people who live, work and study within a five-minute walk of the venue (about a quarter of a mile);
- Those who visit this area to shop or complete medical or business chores or are staying overnight in its hotels;
- Those who are walking or driving by the public space's location.

In suburban and rural areas, whether we like it or not, the car plays a much larger role in personal trips than walking. Consequently, in suburban and rural small downtowns, the most likely users of their



Figure 4: In downtown Downers Grove, IL, Fishel Park and its Veterans Memorial Bandstand are not visible from Main Street, the primary downtown commercial corridor

Source: Google Earth https://earth.google.com/web/@41.79277294,-88.01169412,217.73623228a,292.35769551d,35y,0h,44.99700309t,-0r/data=CIAaThJGciUweDg4MGU0ZTI4MDJmMGJkYmY6MHhiNzhhODlmMmQ1MWU0MzNmGdITF5V55URAlS0Dc5m_AFbAKgtGaXNoZWwgUGFyaxgCIAEoAg

public spaces are to be found within a five-minute drive of the venue. Within that travel shed, one might hypothesise that the propensity to visit the venue has the following hierarchy:

1. Those who are within an easy five-minute walk (approximately a quarter of a mile);
2. Those with a doable ten-minute walk (approximately half a mile);
3. Finally, those who are more than half a mile from the venue, but within a five-minute drive of the public space.

LEARNING FROM BRYANT PARK

Bryant Park in Manhattan has been widely acclaimed for its successful revitalisation and popularity after decades of crime-induced decline. Although it is located in the largest and strongest central business district

(CBD) in the US, its history is relevant to all public spaces, be they in small rural towns or in large, dense urban areas. It demonstrates a number of very important points related to activating public spaces.

Its location gives it great visibility and access to a huge pool of potential visitors

The blocks surrounding this park are densely filled with high-rise office buildings and a large number have ground floor shopfronts. Its surrounding streets are jammed with cars and buses. The park's management estimates that, on an average weekday, about 250,000 people walk by on the pavements of the four streets that surround the park; a significant number are probably tourists.

About 78,000 people are employed within a five-minute walk just of the

park's 42nd Street and Avenue of the Americas entrance. Also, there are 29 hotels within 0.2 miles of the park. Times Square is within a three-minute walk, while the Grand Central Terminal, Macy's and Rockefeller Center are both within roughly six-minute walks. This means that the park does not have to bring people into the area and its management can completely focus on the essential task of capturing users from the vast number of people who are already in the vicinity.

A strong location provides a pool of essential potential users, but the park's 'products' are what gets them to actually make visits

Bryant Park's strong location is what gives it access to a very large number of potential users, but this alone could not assure its success. Consider that the flow of pedestrian traffic near the park during its troubled days was probably lower than today's, but still relatively very strong when compared to downtown locations in other cities. What turned the tide was not the new and renovated office buildings and hotels that have appeared since 1992 — they came after the park became a success — but what was happening inside the park, the new 'products' it offered and how they were 'packaged'. That is what drew all the visitors into the park and encouraged them to stay. A superb location was not enough by itself, but it is still extremely important.

A location's pool of potential users can be made larger

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, before Bryant Park entered its period of steep decline, the area surrounding it was relatively healthy and successful. The park's decline made the leasing of proximate office and retail spaces far more difficult. Pedestrians intentionally walked

on the other sides of the streets from the park or avoided the entire area. The park's resurgence rectified that situation, as pedestrians returned in abundance to its surrounding pavements. New office buildings and hotel projects wanted to not only be located close to it, but to claim the park's name in their addresses — for example, the Bank of America Tower proudly proclaims its address to be One Bryant Park. The overall success of the commercial spaces near the park, as well as the increasing strength of the Midtown CBD, also had their own positive impacts on the size and composition of the park's user pool.³

The implications of this point can be very important for the success of small town public spaces; redevelopment and the recruitment of residents, businesses and nonprofits near these venues can significantly strengthen their pools of potential visitors.

LIKELY POOLS OF POTENTIAL USERS IN SMALLER TOWNS

As with Bryant Park, these pools will most likely be defined by the people who live, work, study and visit within a surrounding area, but that area will be more car trip defined than the densely urban Bryant Park. These pools will obviously also have far fewer potential visitors than Bryant Park's, but then their expected user levels are also far lower.

Residents

Many smaller towns have sparse residential development in their downtown/main street areas, although more and more are rightly trying to correct that situation. For example, one deep dive into successful public spaces in three smaller communities that was done a few years ago (see Table 1) concluded that none had a significant number of downtown residents, although

Table 1: Some characteristics of three smaller communities with successful parks/public spaces

Characteristics	Communities		
	Valparaiso, IN	Somerville, NJ	Greenport, NY
Park or Public Space	Central Park Plaza	Division Street Plaza	Mitchell Park
Town Population	32,000	12,100	2,200
Live & Work in Town	35.4%	6.4%	19.7%
Work Elsewhere	64.6%	93.6%	80.3%
Town Median HH Inc	\$50,182	\$72,271	\$48,578
Downtown Residential Population	Not dense, mainly above stores, few vacancies	Not dense, but growing with new development projects	Village Density
Tourism	Destination in NW Indiana	Insignificant	Very Significant and Seasonal
Employment within 0.25 mi of venue	2,472	2,115	399
% People employed in town who live elsewhere	80%	92%	84%

Somerville was developing a substantial number of new units. This means that most residents probably live beyond an easy walking distance (quarter of a mile) of any downtown public space or even a doable walking distance of under one mile. Another challenge is posed by the fact that most adult residents who are in the workforce will be at their employment locations during the daytimes on all five weekdays. For example, here are the percentages of working residents whose jobs are located out of town in three smaller communities:

- Valparaiso IN, population 32,000: 64.6 per cent;
- Somerville, NJ, population 12,100: 93.6 per cent;
- Greenport, NY, population 2,200: 80.3 per cent.

Events held in a downtown public space on weekends are likely to attract the most adult residents because they are then most likely to be in town and have free leisure time.

The types of residents who are most likely to remain in town on weekdays are retired seniors (the fastest growing age

cohort in rural areas), school children and at-home parents with preschool children. Well designed and managed public spaces in smaller communities would do well to offer attractions that appeal to each of these demographic groups, who are likely to visit them at different times of the day.

As Andy Manshel argues so forcefully in his forthcoming book *What Works: Placemaking in Bryant Park. Revitalizing Cities, Towns and Public Spaces*,⁴ finding successful attractions is largely a matter of trial and error, with much tweaking and recalibration, although greenery, suitable seating and easy access to food and drink are essentials. Below are some ideas about attractions that might be aimed at seniors, school age children and parents with preschool children. They are offered as some possibilities that might be tried and tested, while recognising that there are probably many other possibilities that might be discovered by talking to members of these three potential park-user market segments:

- **Seniors:** Exercise paths for walkers, cyclists and bird watchers; exercise classes; chess/chequers tables; 'reading

rooms'; putting greens. Seniors are likely to appear in the morning and midday hours;

- **School age children:** Playground equipment; bike paths; skateboard areas; soccer/football/baseball fields; basketball courts; outdoor hockey rinks; summer camps (see Figure 5); after-school supervised activity programmes. School children are likely to appear after 3.00pm;
- **Parents with preschool children:** They have a long demonstrated the need to get out of the house and socialise with their peers. For example, in Maplewood, NJ, and Englewood, NJ, tea shops and coffee houses have been turned into places for parents and their children to congregate. In NYC, this often happens in its parks,

where the children can also be safely entertained. For example, on any nice day, just take a walk around any of the playground areas in Manhattan's Central Park (where children may be accompanied by nannies instead of mothers) or in Forest Park in Queens. Appropriate seating, ample shade and clean, accessible toilets encourage the emergence of such social clustering. These parents usually will show up from late morning to late afternoon.

Given that the numbers of potential daytime residential users are likely to be relatively moderate, a downtown public space would do well to cultivate a structured corps of potential repeat users. This can be encouraged if downtown development officials take 'location



Figure 5: Summer childcare programme in Memorial Park, Maplewood, NJ

Source: N. D. Milder

enhancement' steps such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Develop a community centre or library in or adjacent to the public space that has daytime programmes for seniors, children after school and parents with preschool children;
- Locate senior housing within a very short walk of the public space that does not entail a need to cross a street. The attractions in the public space can also serve as a development incentive for such projects;
- Invite any nonprofit that provides after-school programmes to use the public space;
- Invite nonprofits that have summer day camp programmes to use the public space;
- If the public space has the requisite playing fields, invite youth sport leagues to play on them;
- Encourage a coffee shop or tea house that can attract parents with preschool children to a location adjacent to the public space.

It is also helpful to avoid a kind of downtown revitalisation snobbery. Chains such as McDonald's and Starbucks are often scorned by downtown activists, but in smaller downtowns they are regularly strong magnets that attract the available daytime residential population segments. For example:

- In Gering, NE, the downtown McDonald's is its strongest customer traffic generator. It reported having consistent waves of seniors who are customers in the mid-morning and school children without adult supervision coming in after 3.00pm;
- In Englewood, NJ, the downtown manager reported, back in the early 2000s, that the downtown Starbucks attracted a consistent group of mothers

with preschool children in the early afternoons.

Encouraging their opening near a smaller town downtown public space should not be dismissed out of hand. Of course, independents that can perform the same functions should be also courted.

THE CRITICAL DOWNTOWN WORKFORCE

Development density in smaller community downtowns is almost always the result of the agglomeration of businesses. This means that their downtown's critical daytime population consists of a large number of people who work in or near the downtown. An interesting research project carried out by Ryan and Jin on communities in Wisconsin shows just how significant are the numbers of workers who are located within acceptable walking distances and easy driving times of the centres of small downtowns.⁵ Table 2 provides Ryan and Jin's data on four groups of smaller towns categorised by ranges of population size: 1,000–2,500; 2,500–5,000; 5,000–10,000; 10,000–25,000. The top four rows of data show the number of towns in each category and the number of people employed within .25 mile, .50 mile and 1 mile of the downtowns' centres.

In a seminal article, Larry Houstoun's analysis of data from the first ICSC study of office workers showed that they basically averaged trips that lasted nine minutes to and from their lunchtime destinations.⁶ That trip time included time spent exiting their building and then the time taken to walk from there to their destination (and vice versa). To bring the Ryan and Jin data more, if not fully, in line with Houstoun's findings, their data has been translated into downtown employees who have an easy five to

Table 2: Employment within .25 mile, .50 mile and 1 mile of downtown centres in 287 towns in WI with populations between 1,000 and 25,000 in 2010

Small Town Size	Pop. 1000–2500	Pop. 2500–5000	Pop. 5000–10000	Pop. 10000–25000
Number of Towns	143	60	45	39
Emps Within .25 Mile of Downtown Center	400	541	913	1,137
Emps Within .50 Mile of Downtown Center	754	1,057	1,894	2,036
Emps Within 1-Mile of Downtown Center	1,160	2,197	3,971	5,084
Emps with easy walk	400	541	913	1,137
Emps with doable walk	354	516	981	899
Emps beyond doable walk, but within an easy drive	406	1,140	2,077	3,048

Ryan, B. and Jin, J. (October 2011), 'Employment in Wisconsin's Downtowns', Center for Community & Economic Development University of Wisconsin Extension, Staff Paper, available at: https://blogs.ces.uwex.edu/cced/files/2014/12/Downtown_Employment_Analysis112111.pdf

ten-minute walk to its centre and those who are located beyond, but still within an easy drive of the centre. The 'easy drive' category is included because the downtowns of many suburban and rural communities — eg Englewood, NJ; Gering, NE; Sherwood, WI — attract a large number of people who are within a five-minute drive of their centres during weekdays at lunchtimes.

Even the 143 towns with populations between 1,000 and 2,500 have significant daytime workforces averaging:

- 400 who are within easy walks of any public space located near the centre of their downtowns;
- 354 who are within a doable five to ten-minute walk of such a public space;
- 406 who are beyond a ten-minute walk, but within a five-minute drive of such a space (and who probably need another four or five minutes to get to and from their cars).

Among these smallest towns, the average workforce pool of potential users totals 1,160. The larger small towns, of course, have larger workforce pools of potential users.

Even though they are likely to be very proximate to the public space,

converting them into actual visitors is very challenging, simply because for most of the time they are in the vicinity they are busy working. Overwhelmingly, they are most likely to visit during their lunch breaks in the 11.30am to 1.30pm time period (see, for example, Figure 6). They will need to eat their lunches on their visits — indeed, if the public space is an attractive place to eat lunch, it will attract more of their visits in order to eat there. This means that for the small town public space to capture significant amounts of workforce visits, it should have:

- Quality food vendors in or adjacent to the space. These may include restaurants that do takeaways, fast food eateries, delis, food trucks, food carts or kiosks. Whatever they are, they need to provide quality products at affordable prices. A public space in a good location will either have such food vendors nearby or be able to recruit them. A public space poorly located in a fringe or low traffic area, however, will neither have them nor be able to recruit them;
- Movable seating and tables in the space where the workers can enjoyably and comfortably eat their lunches.



Figure 6: In Morristown, NJ, downtown workers visit The Green at lunchtime

Source: N. D. Milder

The workforce users of the public space can be critical pump primers for attracting additional users. Other downtown visitors, seeing them in the public space, may also be lured into visiting it and perhaps also eating their lunches there.

Tourism

Yes, tourism can provide some small town public spaces with a significant number of visitors. For example, Greenport, NY, only has a total of 2,200 year-round residents, who have relatively modest annual incomes, and a daytime downtown workforce of 399, but its Mitchell Park attracts over 300,000 visitors annually. These visitors are day trippers from the county and beyond, second home owners, overnight guests at its hotels, B&Bs and marina, as well as travellers passing through to use its ferries to get to Shelter Island, the Hamptons and the casinos in Connecticut.⁷ Public space managers in

small communities with a strong tourist flow should think about ways to attract them.

That said, care should be taken to assure that the attractions that the park or public space offers to attract tourists do not conflict with the attitudes and preferences of residents. Strong, attractive parks and public spaces are usually important cornerstones of a community's central social district, and nothing should be done to jeopardise that role. Indeed, strong park attractions aimed at residents probably will also please many tourists.

Still, most smaller rural and suburban communities do not have significant tourist flows, although their leaders may want to attract more out-of-towners. The focus then should be on residents and those who have jobs located in the community. If that is done well, then out-of-town visitors also may be attracted.

**STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT:
ATTRACTIONS THAT DO NOT
REQUIRE MUCH, IF ANY, STAFF TO
FUNCTION**

Contrary to what many small town leaders fear, there is a large and well-documented financial toolbox available that they can use to create attractive public spaces.⁸ In these smaller towns, substantial financial support from the municipality will definitely be needed and is essential for winning outside funding and the use of such important financial tools as tax increment financing. It probably will also be necessary to assure proper maintenance, although responsibility for programming may be given to a non-profit organisation.

Recent reports suggest that parks and public spaces are now attracting increased support from philanthropic organisations

and wealthy private donors.⁹ In Valparaiso, IN, for example, a local family recently contributed \$3m for the construction of Phase II of the downtown's Grand Central Plaza Park.

Strategically, it can be reasonably argued that the most pivotal challenge for smaller town public spaces is how to create and maintain attractions that stimulate visitors to engage in various types of activity — for example, eating lunch or a snack, playing chess or ping pong, birdwatching, riding a swing, reading a magazine or book, etc. The opportunities to engage in such activities are essential if more visitors are to be attracted on non-event days.

For those concerned about how to finance the creation of these attractions and the staff needed to operate them, there are several possible responses.



Figure 7: Spray pads are popular and just have to be turned on and off

Source: N. D. Milder



Figure 8: Chess/chequers tables are also popular

Source: N. D. Milder

First, select attractions that are relatively affordable to create and that do not require much staff time, if any, to be operational. Moveable seating and tables so visitors can eat lunches and snacks need not be expensive to create and require no staff time to supervise. The same goes for climbing rocks, adult or children's swings and chess tables. Spray pads, popular across the nation, may need a little staff time to turn them on and off (see Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10).

Figures 7 to 10 show some of the many attractions that — although perhaps originated in larger cities — small town parks and public spaces can deploy, which are relatively affordable to create and do not require much staff, if any, to operate.

Other attractions maybe more expensive to implement and require staff to operate, for example a carousel or ice rink. Their operational costs can be



Figure 9: Kids love to climb and hang

Source: N. D. Milder

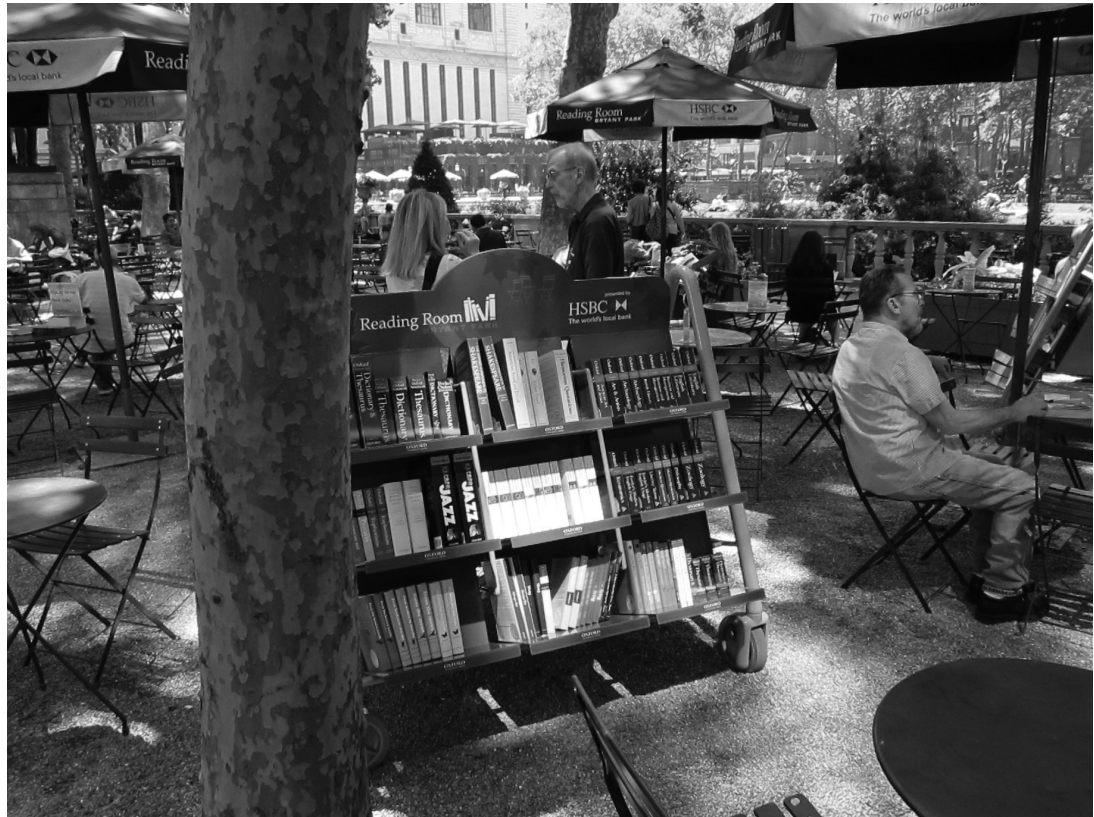


Figure 10: Reading rooms do not require a lot of supervision

Source: N. D. Milder

covered by sponsorships and user fees. It probably will take some time to attract sponsors and meaningful numbers of users.

Finally, if paying for staff is a problem, then perhaps volunteers can be mobilised. Of course, the reliability of volunteers can be a problem. Involving civic groups such as garden clubs, chess clubs and birdwatching groups to provide voluntary services may be one way to address the situation.

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