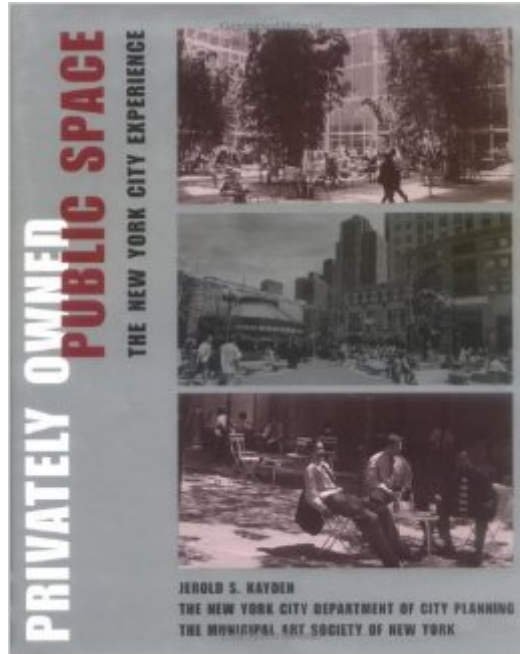


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Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience



Synopsis

Hailed by the Wall Street Journal as a "juicy little time bomb of a book", *Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience* examines for the first time, New York City's 39-year mixed experience with the production of more than 500 plazas, parks, and atriums located on private property yet by law accessible to and usable by the public. Until now, comprehensive, systematic knowledge about this vast collection of public spaces has not existed, either for experts or members of the public. To remedy this gap, Harvard University professor Jerold S. Kayden, The New York City Department of City Planning, and The Municipal Art Society of New York have joined forces to research and write *Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience*. Through words, photographs, scaled site plans, maps, and analysis of newly assembled data, they examine history, law, design, and use of the city's privately owned public spaces. Each of the more than 500 spaces is individually discussed to provide far-reaching comparative information about this unique category of public space. In reading this book, designers, planners, lawyers, and academics will gain greater understanding about the possibilities and problems inherent in the design, management, and enforcement of privately owned public space. Public officials, private owners, and civic group representatives will learn more about their roles in ensuring public access and vitality of such spaces. Individuals will discover where New York City's public spaces are located and what amenities they offer. Everyone will comprehend more completely the contribution that privately owned public space can make toward open and attractive cities in which all individuals have access to a diversity of public places.

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Customer Reviews

This book is divided into two parts. Part One (about 20% of the book) describes the history, law, and experience with publicly owned private spaces. Part Two describes and evaluates each of New York's 503 spaces. You might think that a discussion of the law and history of publicly owned private spaces might appeal only to city planners, developers and lawyers. You would be wrong. It would be hard to find a more lucid and balanced discussion of what happens when politicians attempt to direct the course of urban development. Anyone interested in public policy will find this discussion illuminating. The descriptions of the spaces in Part Two combine a critical examination of the architecture and design with a practical discussion of how well these spaces work or, in many cases, don't work. Anyone who lives in or visits New York City could spend a fascinating day visiting these spaces with this book in hand.

The wonder of this book is that it exists at all. The amount of research needed to put together descriptions, including map/layouts of 550 buildings is mind boggling. The fact the spaces exist at all adds to the allure. This hybrid solution is a way for developers to build higher than they would otherwise be allowed. In exchange, they agree to make public some of their street level space. Sometimes this just means an enlarged sidewalk. Sometimes it is an entirely enclosed atrium. In midtown, a number of buildings mid block between Sixth and Seventh have created broad passages, some interior, some exterior, through their buildings, so that pedestrians can walk right through five or six blocks without having to go to the corner and back. In blustery winter, they are a godsend. In all cases, it means the space is open to all, meaning you don't need an employee pass or have to go through Security to enter. That some spaces are locked up in violation of the agreement should be no surprise. Unless you've read this book, there's essentially no way to know if you have the "right" to enter or not. This is a classic New York solution: bizarre, convoluted and inefficiently enforced. But like everything else in New York, it works, adding to the fabulous livability reputation the city so deserves. This book not only details the space, but also the agreements with the city, making it a hugely important document as time goes on and records are "forgotten". It's all here, in one well laid out, easy to read place. David Wineberg

Very good. It needs to be updated: 15 years later, NY got a some new POPS.

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