

The overseer of the six-acre park, on city-owned land, Mr. Biederman plans to set up an Olympic-sized portable rink, Zamboni and all, on the park's lawn in November, free to everyone (at least those who bring their own skates). The facility would be closed for the season at the end



Joe Hill/Getty Images

January 2006 to make way for Fashion Week, the park's major February shmatte extravaganza.

Mr. Biederman is rhapsodic when he envisions the vista of developing skaters "in the enclosure of surrounding skyscrapers and the library to the east."

Excavation and construction for any permanent rink would be fraught, since underneath the park lawn is a climate-controlled cocoon for book storage that is an extension of the stacks of the New York Public Library.

Enter the portable rink. According to Mr. Biederman, engineering surveys have determined that the weight of the trucks and tents on the grass during Fashion Week far exceeds that of a rink full of skaters. And since the lawn already has rain-and-snow-run drainage, Mr. Biederman said, leak from a future ice rink would do no harm to the library stacks.

Lions Front, And a Rink In the Back?

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ing the plan," said Caroline Oyama, a spokeswoman for the library.

The planned skating rink is but the flashiest pirouette of a grand new initiative to increase the use of Bryant Park in the cold. "We'd like to winterize the park, make it a park for all seasons," Mr. Biederman said.

He added that a new Bryant Park rink would not cannibalize attendance at other skating facilities "because they are really in different neighborhoods." The option of skating in Bryant Park "would create a whole new group of patrons," he predicted, referring to the 40,000 office workers adjacent to the park and the 100,000 within two blocks.

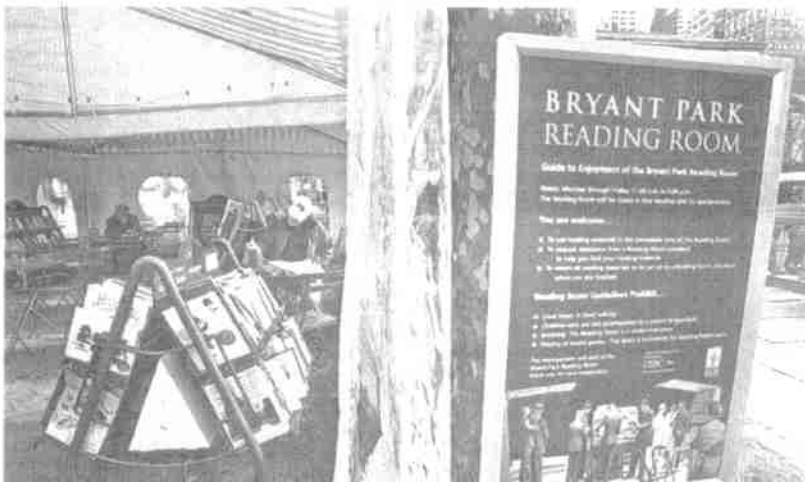
Bryant Park's landlord, the city's parks commissioner, Adrian Benepe, said, "We are intrigued by the idea." Would a new rink lower attendance at his department's Wollman Skating Rink or Laaker Skating Rink? "I don't think competition is a worry because Central Park is a destination location, attracting many loyal, well-established skating groups," the commissioner said. "A new rink could, in fact, be helpful in relieving overcrowding."

He added, "Competition might be more likely with Rockefeller Center." A Midtown cynosure since it first opened on Christmas day in 1936, the Rink at Rockefeller Center sits seven blocks north, and charges adults \$14 on weekdays and \$17 on weekends, exclusive of skate rentals.

Admission at Wollman rink, on the east side of Central Park between 63rd and 64th Streets, is \$8.50 for adults on weekdays and \$11 on weekends. Laaker rink, in the park at 107th Street, charges \$4.50 for adults. Sky Rink at Chelsea Piers, at 23rd Street and the Hudson River, charges \$13.50 for adults. The Riverbank Skating Rink at 145th Street on the river charges \$4.50 for adults.



Shoppers last night at Fêtes de Noël: The Holiday Shops at Bryant Park, based on holiday markets in Europe. Photographs by Peter Wassenaar: The New York Times



BRYANT PARK READING ROOM

Guidelines for Enjoyment of the Bryant Park Reading Room

Hours: Monday through Friday, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
The Reading Room will be closed on the nights and on the weekends.

The general guidelines:

1. To help maintain order in the reading room, the Bryant Park Reading Room will be closed on the nights and on the weekends.
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Reading Room Guidelines Poster

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