

The Park Ranger

Restoring Midtown's Green Jewel



Dan Biederman surveys the bustling midday scene in Bryant Square Park.

In the 1980s, midtown office workers had a limited choice for lunch: stay at your desk or go to a restaurant or deli in the neighborhood.

In recent years, thanks to **Dan Biederman** and the Bryant Park Restoration Corp., sitting in the park and enjoying the midday sun has become a favorite pastime for thousands of midtown office workers. Although the park had been a haven for drug dealers and prostitutes in the '80s, now, under private management, it is virtually crime free and on an average day draws more than 10,000 New Yorkers for activities ranging from sunbathing to nighttime film screenings.

Biederman, president of the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, says the most gratifying part of the success in

converting the park to an urban oasis from one riddled by drugs and crime is that it has become a model for other cities.

"Our belief is that every service provided by government can be improved upon," said Biederman, who gave the example of litter collection which had become too mechanized. In Bryant Park, he said, it is done the old-fashioned way with shovel and broom.

The park also programs 380 events a year and is home to the very successful Bryant Park Grill, which pays BPRC \$700,000 a year in rent. "We got to this stage because we're perfectionists," said Biederman. "But when I sit in the park now, I still see some things I don't like. We're going to keep on polishing it and make it better each year." ■