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MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
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Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP
Commissioner
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

March 22, 2021

Re: To Support Temporary Cordoning Off Of Sinkhole In Area of Swings In William McCray Park And Request of Emergency Feasibility Study To Assess And Repair Sinkhole

Dear Commissioner Silver:

Manhattan Community Board (CB) 10 is writing this letter in support of Temporary Cordoning Off Of The Sinkhole Located In The Area Of The Swings In William McCray Playground (M110) And The Request Of An Emergency Feasibility Study To Assess And Repair The Sinkhole.

As an outcome of the March 10th Parks and Recreation Committee meeting, it was determined that the sinkhole, in the area of the swings of William McCray Playground (138th Street) - (Park ID M110), warrants immediate attention as it presents an urban geological condition. It is unpredictable, and as such poses imminent danger to the community, in particular, the students of the St. Mark the Evangelist School who utilize the park for recess activities. We have requested that this issue be addressed in the upcoming CB 10 March 17th District Cabinet Meeting.

The community is in need of an immediate and effective treatment to the sinkhole in order to avert harm to anyone in the community. We would like to know what steps have already been taken and what next steps are being considered.

Principal Dominic Fanelli of the St. Mark Evangelist School (located at 55 West 138th Street), attended the Parks and Recreation meeting and explained the circumstances as they impact on the school. The playground is adjacent to the school which has a population of approximately 270 3-Pre K to 8th Grade students. The school uses the facility for student recess. The sinkhole fills with water that collects and becomes stagnant. This poses a potential health risk as the standing water accumulates debris and germs.

Again, this is an emergency situation which warrants immediate attention from NYC Parks. It presents a hazardous and unpredictable condition. We have brought this issue to Parks and have listed it in our District Needs Statement for several years. We have been advised that the sinkhole which has existed for at least twenty years is monitored weekly, however what assessment is being made of the dynamics occurring beneath the ground cover of the sinkhole.

“Urbanization is accompanied by the rapid development of both the surface and subsurface of urban areas and impacts the environment in various ways. Rapid urbanization and expanding land usage have increased damage to subsurface infrastructures such as sewer and water pipelines, which results in pipeline leakage. The increasing leakage from sewer and water pipelines and ground collapse in urban areas due to excavation, pipe aging, underground construction [1], and tree root growth has resulted in damaging the underground infrastructures and water pipelines



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and hence causing leakage, which results in ground subsidence and sinkholes. The different types of tunneling methods that have been adopted for the construction of various underground subways in urban areas have a huge impact on the nearby utilities such as sewer and water pipelines [2]. A sinkhole is a cavity in the ground that is formed by underground erosion and depression of the ground surface. There are two types of sinkholes: natural and manmade. Manmade sinkholes are associated with leakage from sewer and water pipelines and soil erosion.

https://res.mdpi.com/d_attachment/sustainability/sustainability-12-00310/article_deploy/sustainability-12-00310.pdf
Retrieved 2/12/21

Recent sinkhole incidents in New York City:

Saturday, Oct. 24th, 2020 - The horrifying incident happened near a bus stop in the Bronx. Surveillance video shows Leonard Shoulders, 33, was waiting at the stop when the sinkhole opened up beneath him, dropping him 3.7 metres to 4.6 metres (12-15 feet) down into the rat's lair. <https://globalnews.ca/news/7432019/rats-sidewalk-sinkhole-new-york/>
Retrieved 3/15/21

June 28th, 2020 - EAST VILLAGE, Manhattan (WABC) -- A sinkhole opened up and swallowed the front half of an SUV in Manhattan Sunday. The earth opened up on E. 2nd St. in the East Village just after 1:30 a.m.

<https://abc7ny.com/sinkhole-east-village-manhattan-nyc/6278223/> Retrieved 3/15/21

It is the recommendation of Manhattan CB10 that immediate attention and remedy be brought to the matter of this sinkhole in order to avert a threat to anyone in the community, especially as it relates to the safety of young children who utilize the William McCray Playground.

Sincerely,

Cicely Harris
Chairperson Chair
Manhattan Community Board 10

Karen Horry
Parks and Recreation Committee
Manhattan Community Board 10

cc: William T. Castro, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation (via e-mail)
Chauncey Parker, NYPD Deputy Commissioner for Community Partnerships (via e-mail)
Honorable Adriano Espaillat, Congress Member (via e-mail)
Honorable Brian Benjamin, NY State Senator (via e-mail)
Honorable Inez Dickens, NY State Assembly Member (via e-mail)
Honorable Al Taylor, Assembly District 71 (via e-mail)
Honorable Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President via (e-mail)
Honorable Bill Perkins, NYC Council (via e-mail)
Dominic Franelli, Principal, St. Mark the Evangelist School
Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, Archdiocese Of New York (via e-mail)