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CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
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Resolution To Support the Naming of the NYC Parks William McCray Playground Basketball Court to Darius Lee Basketball Court

WHEREAS Manhattan Community Board 10 supports the naming of the basketball court at William McCray Playground as a memorial to the life of Darius Lee, and;

WHEREAS William McCray Playground (Park ID M110) is a 0.46 acre and located on West 138th St. between Malcolm X Boulevard and 5th Avenue in the Borough of Manhattan in Community Board 10; and

WHEREAS Darius Lee was tragically and fatally shot on June 20th, 2022 in Harlem River Park near the intersection of East 139th Street and Fifth Avenue; and

WHEREAS William McCray Playground serves as the playground to the adjacent Saint Mark the Evangelist School located at 55 West 138th Street where Darius Lee attended as a child and is located across the street from 36 W. 138th St. where he was raised before heading to college; and

WHEREAS Darius Lee was a rising basketball star who made his family proud. He was an exemplary young man who served as a role-model to his friends and neighborhood kids. Darius loved basketball and renaming his neighborhood court would be a fitting memorial; and

WHEREAS Darius Lee was the former standout at St. Raymond High School for Boys in The Bronx and went on to play for SUNY Sullivan Community College in upstate New York before being recruited by Houston Baptist University in Texas; and

WHEREAS Darius Lee excelled in the sport of basketball and was aspiring to playing for the New York Knicks; and

WHEREAS William McCray Playground is one of nine playgrounds that was built by the Parks Department through a war memorial fund, and was opened simultaneously on July 15th, 1934. Seeking additional open spaces for children, Parks Commissioner Robert Moses obtained a legal ruling which permitted use of the fund for playground development. Marked with a commemorative tablet, each property was to honor the memory of a soldier who gave his life in combat.

WHEREAS The playground is named in memorial to World War I Harlem Hellfighter William McCray (1898-1918) who was born in New York City on February 7th, 1898. Corporal McCray attended public school locally and enlisted on June 4th, 1917 in the 15th Regiment, New York Guard, the troop popularly known as the Harlem Hellfighters. All of the enlisted men in the regiment (formed in 1913) were African-American, while most of the officers were white. The soldiers arrived in France in December 1917 and were redesignated as the 369th Regiment. They joined the 16th and 161st Divisions of the French Army under the command of General Levaue. Using French weapons, helmets, and equipment, the 369th fought bravely and earned the Croix de Guerre as a unit citation. When the American headquarters asked the French to segregate the troops, the request was refused. McCray attained the rank of corporal. He was killed in a local infantry attack in the Champagne Sector on September 12th, 1918. A year after the end of the war, the Harlem Hellfighters constructed their armory at Fifth Avenue and 142nd Street. In addition to their service in World War I, the unit was active in World War II and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf Wars; and

WHEREAS NYC Parks acquired the site at West 138th Street between Fifth and Malcolm X Boulevard in 1934. Later additions of land in 1989 and 1992 more than doubled the size of the property. On June 22nd, 1994 an extensive renovation was completed that provided colorful modular play equipment, safety surfacing, painted games, spray shower, benches, and game tables. New trees were planted, and the basketball court was completely resurfaced. The playground was rededicated on November 16th, 1994; and

WHEREAS William McCray Playground is a NYC Parks Community Parks Initiative (CPI) capital project designated for reconstruction to remedy a subsidence resulting from improper infill; and

THEREFORE NOW be it resolved that Manhattan Community Board 10 strongly supports the Community recommendation to name the basketball court at William McCray Playground.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that on Wednesday, October 5th, Manhattan Community Board 10 supports the community recommendation to name the basketball court at William McCray Playground, with a vote in favor of 34 yes 0 no 0 abstentions.