



# CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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**Hon. Marquis A. Harrison**  
*Chairperson*

**Shatic Mitchell**  
*District Manager*

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Wednesday, April 12th 2023, 6:30 pm

**Hon. Karen Horry, Chair**

Meeting began at 6:34 pm and was held via Zoom link. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Karen Horry, Committee Chair.

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Chair, Hon. Karen Horry, Hon. Elvin Garcia, Hon. Barbara Nelson, Hon. Jaran Manzanet, Hon. Dana Points and

**Committee Members Excused:** Hon. Tahanie Aboushi, Hon. Verna Diggs and Hon. Elvin Garcia.

**Committee Members Absent:** Hon. Shamier Settle, Hon. Derek Perkinson and Hon. Nathan Quist

**Board Members Present:** Hon. Shawn Brannon and Hon. Kimberly McLaurin

**District Office:** Jasmin Heatley (Community Associate)

**Guests in attendance:** NYC Parks Manhattan Commissioner Anthony Perez, Kyshia Smith (MBPO), Lindsay Schott (Million Trees), Hannah Emple (The Nature Conservancy), Erica Sopha (Vice President for Park Use & Stewardship, Central Park Conservancy), Steven Thomson (Director of Thought Leadership, Central Park Conservancy), Rafael Escano (NYC Department of Transportation), Fred Sims (Harlem Little League), Darnell Kyles, Laura D., Tara E., Dave Williams (NYC Parks Manager, Districts 10 & 11), Elijah (T.A.G. Youth), Harlem Rose, Jana LaSorte (Administrator, Harlem Historic Parks), Rachel Daykin (119th Street Block Association), Rokeya Rahman (NYU- Wagner), Charlene P., Kadeem Robinson (NYU), Sarah Yi, Jackie Robinson Conservancy, Rose Washington Williams, Paul Covington, Randi Gu, iPhone 30, Shiyao Li,

## **AGENDA**

### **I. Welcome/Introductions**

### **II. Presentations**

#### **a. Central Park Conservancy - Central Park Drives**

The Conservancy, in collaboration with NYC DOT and NYC Parks, is undertaking a comprehensive study focused on improving safety and mobility on the Drives. The study will include extensive community outreach, with an online survey and presentations before all Community Boards around the Park. Sam Schwartz Engineering has been hired to serve as consultant, which recently concluded a similar review of Prospect Park.

The Central Park Conservancy (CPC) is leading a community-informed, multi-year plan of the Park's Drives to increase safety and mobility for the Park's 42 million annual visitors. Central Park became car-free in 2018 and as the COVID pandemic increased overall park visitation, the Drives have experienced unprecedented use at all times of day. Patrons include pedestrians, cyclists, joggers, increasingly popular electric modes of transportation, caregivers, school groups, bird enthusiasts and more. The goal of CPC is to foster shared circulation routes for different users that are as diverse as the dynamic city. The six miles of roadway accommodates pedestrians, walkers, baby strollers, runners, joggers and bikers/E-bikers, pedicabs and horse carriages.

The Conservancy held focused discussions in 2018 and 2019 with DOT and Park users and identified a range of issues - all of which remain pertinent today. Findings were as follows:

- Dedicated lanes do not serve to segregate uses - cyclists, runners, skaters, pedestrians, pedicabs, horse carriages, etc.
- Signals are widely ignored
- Bikers have trouble getting from East to West
- Crossings are challenging for seniors, children and the disabled
- Emergency and authorized vehicles have difficulty navigating the Drive due to recreational use of the vehicle lane
- Lack of Enforcement - Park Enforcement Patrol has faced years of cutbacks
- Commercially related uses - pedicabs, horse carriages - have grown.
- Changing work and commuting patterns driven by
- COVID-19 has added new levels of complexity characterized by more people, at more times of day utilizing the Park as remote work becomes more prevalent
- More people are commuting through the Park to stay off mass transit
- E-bikes and other e-vehicles have added a new and precarious dynamic to the Drives

CPC has garnered over 7,000 survey responses, which features 15 Drive-focused questions and more than 1,500 feedback emails. The survey is expected to be available until early June.

Proposed remediation will include Signage, Roadway/crosswalk striping, Surface materials & treatments, Cross-park mobility, Lighting, Signalization, Traffic calming measures, Policies, Education and Improved enforcement.

CPC plans to host an in-person third Open House this summer and expects to develop options for designs incorporating feedback analysis by the fall or winter 2023. A subsequent Draft report will be released upon which Community Board Presentations will be made and

Final Recommendations generated. CPC is poised to create a concrete roadmap for future changes that will result in a study that can be of value to all NYC parks - and beyond.

**Outcome:** The presentation was informational and does require any action from the Committee at this time, other than to support in distribution of the survey in CB10.

#### **b. Million Trees Initiative Resolution**

The issue was vetted in Committee as an agenda item at the March 2023 meeting, at which time the Committee voted to support the project. The Resolution was drafted, circulated to Committee members for review and returned to Committee for whole group discussion and a vote.

**Outcome:** Committee did not have quorum, however, the sentiment of the Committee was to move the Resolution forward to the Executive Committee for a vote.

#### **c. Central Park Conservancy Climate Lab**

The Central Park Climate Lab is a partnership between the Central Park Conservancy, the Yale School of the Environment and the Natural Areas Conservancy. The Lab uses science-based research to describe the threats of climate change to urban parks and the benefits of existing and potential climate mitigation and adaptation services that parks provide. The Climate Lab is working to synthesize spatial data and is piloting in-field research methodologies that are scalable to other parks. The Lab is designed to develop practical science that park managers can use to make informed decisions and integrate climate goals in operations and design.

Air quality and associated human health will be vastly improved as the urban forest removes pollutants from the air, beyond greenhouse gases. Trees affect the concentration of pollutants and other aspects of air quality in a plethora of ways, including, but not limited to: absorbing particulate matter and gaseous pollutants, cause changes in air circulation because they block the wind or generate fluctuations in wind direction that can reduce or increase air pollution, depending on the local landscape and context.

Urban parkland and park climate benefits are unevenly distributed. Neighborhoods that are majority nonwhite have, on average, access to 44% less park acreage than majority white neighborhoods. (Trust for Public Land)<sup>1</sup>. Protecting urban parks in the face of climate change is a matter of environmental justice, as communities of color in cities have historically had less access to open green spaces and the health benefits that they provide.

Although urban parks are as vulnerable to the effects of climate change as wilderness areas, coastlines, and other parts of our national landscape, they are overlooked in climate research and adaptation planning. NYC experienced the hottest July on record in 2021, and three heat waves- including 17 days that exceeded 90 degrees- highlighting the importance of a healthy tree canopy.

Increasing global temperatures, a rise in pollution, and a build-up of nutrients in run-off water lead to the excess growth and prevalence of harmful algal blooms or Duckweed in the Park's water bodies. The Climate Lab is dedicated to maintaining the health of the affected water

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tpl.org/parks-address-climate-change-report>

bodies. Hurricane Ida brought a record 3.15 inches of rain to Central Park in one hour on September 1, 2021, beating the record set just 10 days prior.

After incubating in Central Park, the Lab will expand its research to other greenspaces in New York City and around the country. With the data acquired, the Lab will identify scalable strategies for implementing climate mitigation and adaptation protocols in urban parks across the nation.

In the summer of 2022, Natural Areas Conservancy launched a nation wide study with their Forests in Cities Network to study the cooling benefits of urban forests. Simultaneously, the Institute for Urban Parks worked with Natural Areas Conservancy to design a similar study to understand the cooling benefits of different vegetation cover types of urban parks, beginning with Central Park. The studies complement each other but have critical differences.

The Central Park Climate Lab will be piloting research methodologies over the summer with the goal of scaling research over time. Some of this will include on-the-ground park research with leveraging remote sensing to measure change over time.

Associated activities include Tours with Camp Cada Paso, Earth Month Programs, CB11 Earth Day Conference, Climate Action Tour, Discovery Walk for Families: North Woods, New-York Historical Society Virtual Talk: The Past, Present, and Future of the Central Park Landscape.

For further information or comment contact:  
Michelle Mueller Gamez,  
Sustainability & Climate Research Manager:  
[michelle.muellergamez@centralparknyc.org](mailto:michelle.muellergamez@centralparknyc.org)

**Outcome:** The presentation was informational and does not require any action from the Committee.

#### **d. West 119th Street Block Association Garden**

The lot in question is located at 19-21 West 119th (Block 1718/29). It is 14ft wide and 84ft deep (1,150 sq ft in size). It was originally part of a larger swathe of empty lots but subdivided for condos in 2016. Today, just a 14ft narrow sliver remains. The lot had been vacant for two decades prior to being used by the community as a garden with encouragement from HPD which has jurisdiction over the site. For years, members of the community kept the lot clean and turned it from an eye sore to a flourishing community garden. They installed a tool shed, a large community compost bin, and built several large, raised beds. The gardeners have organized educational events about gardening, composting, and provided a safe space for neighbors to relax and come together. The garden has been a focal point for block beautification which involved neighbors of all ages. In the spring of 2023, HPD padlocked the garden and announced they want to clear the lot.

The Garden is located at 19-21 West 119th Street (Block 1718 and Lot 29) and 13 West 119th Street (Block 1718 Lot 31). The sites are located on 119th Street between 5th Avenue and

Malcolm X Boulevard. The 119th Street Block Association Garden would like to begin the licensing process which has been pending.

A NYC Revocable License Agreement<sup>2</sup> was issued in 2013 and a Green Thumb Garden Registration for 2011-2015 for the original garden at 13 West 119th Street. The Gardeners resigned a NYC Revocable License Agreement for 2014 as well as a GreenThumb Garden Registration Form for the 13 West 119th Street (Block 1718 Lot 31) site. In 2014 the Garden made a request to extend the garden to include the adjacent HPD lot located at 21 West 119th Street.

The 13 West 119th Street garden; a 950 sq. ft. garden site had been active since its inception in 1998 up until its padlocking and closure without advance notice on March 1st, 2023. There was a brief pause in gardening when condos were built on 15-19 West 119th Street, as well as the lot at 21 West 119th Street which became a building site during the same period. Gardeners felt obligated to cut the padlock at 13 West 119th Street to enter and care for their chickens. A second padlock was placed on the garden on March 13th at which time all of the on-site chickens were removed to an animal shelter. The gardeners have repeatedly reached out to HPD Commissioner Adolfo Carrión, but have not received a response as of this date in their efforts to reinstate their stewardship of the garden site.

The 119th Street Block Association met with our Parks and Recreation Committee on April 12th, 2023 to present their concerns. The group expressed that a transference of the city-owned property from HPD to NYC Parks would ensure that the garden would not come under threat of being closed to accommodate development. They are also requesting that the garden be removed from the HPD potential development list.

Councilwoman 9th District Kristin Richardson Jordan provided a letter of support. The group has submitted 90 signatures on their hard copy petition in support of their reinstatement, in addition to 309 digital signatures on their online petition at <https://www.change.org/p/save-the-community-garden-at-19-west-119th-street>.

The garden is a vital community asset which not only provides food but is a healthy inner-city enclave for neighbors coalescing around the art of gardening despite age, race, gender, socio-economics, recent and generational residents. It is community at its best.

**Outcome:** The Group is requesting a letter in support of their request to have the lot returned to the community and gardeners of 119th Street. The matter is time-sensitive, as the site will be allocated for development by HPD. The meeting lacked quorum. It is the sentiment of the Committee to draft and review a letter of support and move the item forward to the Executive Committee.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nyccgc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/GreenThumb-License-Agreement-2019-002.pdf>

**e. NYCFC FREE Summer Program Soccer Bloc at Brigadier General Playground**

NYCFC is looking to host their free summer program Soccer Bloc at Brigadier General Playground. This free soccer program teaches youth technical soccer skills while educating them on social issues through NYCFC's soccer curriculum. The program will be youth-led, for youth led by youth! The program is designed to engage kids to participate and for young adults to apply for assistant and head coach positions. The Brigadier General Playground mini soccer pitch will be location. The free program will run for 6 weeks from July 10- August 18 from 9:00 am-2:00 pm

**Outcome:** The Committee will support in outreach to community to recruit participants for the free summer youth program.

**f. NYCFC 2nd Annual Soccer Festival**

The Third Rail, an independent supporters group for New York City FC (NYCFC) of Major League Soccer. It was founded on May 21, 2013, the same day as the expansion club was announced. The name of the club references the third rail, which provides power to the New York City Subway. CB 10 collaborated with the fan-based organization along with NYCFC and Black Players For Change to host the First Annual Soccer Tourney in 2022. The event was held in the Brigadier General Charles Young Playground at the mini soccer pitch. This year the 2nd Annual tournament is scheduled for June 7th. Flyers will be made available.

**Outcome:** The Committee will table at the event and provide recruitment support for local area youth. Event budget will be submitted to the District Manager.

**g. Jackie Robinson Park Pool Conversion to Pool/Ice Skating Rink Statement of Objectives and Goals - Subcommittee Formation**

The Committee discussed a draft of a Statement of Objective and Goals for the proposed project. Jackie Robinson Pool and Play Center was one of eleven immense outdoor public pools the Parks Department opened in the summer of 1936. The pools project was financed by the Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA), as part of a massive effort to alleviate adverse health conditions and provide safe recreation in predominantly working-class communities.

Led by architect Aymar Embury II and landscape architect Gilmore D. Clarke, the planning team produced a series of distinct complexes, each one sensitive to its site and topography. Massive filtration systems, heating units, and even underwater lighting provided a more controlled bathing experience than the often treacherous and polluted waterways in which the City's masses had traditionally swum. The palette of pools building materials was mainly inexpensive brick, concrete and cast stone, but the styles ranged from Romanesque Revival to Art Deco.

Harlem's Jackie Robinson Pool measures 235 by 82 feet was designed by architects Aymar Embury II and Harry Ahrens to accommodate 4,090 bathers at a time. Nestled in a steep bluff, with an arcaded façade and entryway resembling a medieval castle, the facility was once known as "Colonial Park Pool," in reference to the area's role in key Revolutionary War battles. The facility opening on August 8, 1936 was cause for celebration and featured Bill "Bojangles" Robinson singing "Battle Hymn of the Republic" to a crowd of 25,000. The facility was named for baseball legend Jackie Robinson in 1978, and a bronze bust of Robinson by artist Inge Hardeson was installed in the lobby in 1981. The pool and recreation center (including the atrium interior) were designated an official New York City Landmark in 2007.



The Committee has held several discussions on the proposed conversion and has expressed the need for a feasibility study to NYC Parks. Board Chair Harrison authorized formation of the subcommittee in early April.

**Outcome:** The Committee is in the process of finalizing a Statement of Objectives and Goals for submission to NYC Parks, as well as identifying Community Stakeholders to collaborate on the subcommittee. Meeting schedule will be announced.

**III. Voting** - The Committee did not have quorum, so there was no vote taken on the Million Trees Initiative Resolution.

#### **IV. Discussions**

##### **a. CB 10 Park Updates**

- i. Harlem Historic Park/ Jackie Robinson Park Update** - The 2nd Annual Jackie Robinson Day Event will be held on April 15th. The event will feature soccer and baseball clinics, baseball pitch tent, games, Including jumbo Jenga, Ladder Ball, Cornhole, Information tables from Community Organizations, live music, local food trucks,(including a Petco food truck). Saturday, April 15th, 2023 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. the grandstand will be at the Bandshell, W. 148th St and Bradhurst Ave. Harlem Little League (HHL) will set off the festivities with a parade. CPC is assisting with the installation of short fencing around the front lawn which will be re-seeded. The Department of Sanitation is implementing a new dog campaign related to rat abatement education to build awareness. A 2nd Shift Program will begin which involves barbecue area cleanup. Question was raised pertaining to park projects with respect to cyclists and pedestrians.
- ii. Jackie Robinson Park Conservancy Updates** - JRPC will table at the 2nd Annual Jackie Robinson Day event and support in activities.
- iii. Hansborough Recreation Center Updates** - The capital projects to renovate the facility, install a new elevator and reconstruct the pool remain on track. Any exercise equipment in need of repair is being addressed.
- iv. Brigadier General Charles Young Playground** - capital projects to reconstruct the ball field, ball field perimeter and comfort station renovation remain on track. Groundbreaking is scheduled for August 2023. Trees being graffitied with fraternity markings.
- v. Brigadier General Charles Young Triangle** - No update at this time. DOT has not installed safety bollards.
- vi. Harlem River Park** - NYC EDC be scheduling charrettes to garner community input with respect to project completion and programming in the CB 10 portion towards the end of 2023.
- vii. St. Nicholas Park So.** - designated a Community Parks Initiative (CPI) capital project - Design phase is underway- No update at this time.
- viii. William McCray Playground** - Soil sample results are still pending.

- ix. **Renaissance Playground** - A Community Parks Initiative (CPI) capital project. - Parks will be holding a charrette - date still pending.
- x. **Rucker Park** - No update at this time.
- xi. **Courtney Callendar Playground** - Comfort station reconstruction still pending to become a NYC Parks capital project. Advocacy is ongoing.
- xii. **A. Philip Randolph Square** - A Community Parks Initiative (CPI) capital project. - Parks will be holding a charrette on Thursday, April 27th from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Flyers will be sent out.
- xiii. **Frederick Johnson Playground** - Comfort Station Reconstruction Project is on-track for completion by Spring of 2023.
- xiv. **Fred Samuel Playground** - no update at this time.
- xv. **Harlem Lane Program (Percy E. Sutton Playground)** - no update at this time.
- xvi. **Langston Hughes Playground** - no update at this time.
- xvii. **Hancock Square** - no update at this time.
- xviii. **ACP, Jr. Malls** - Department of Sanitation will be assisting with the malls for garbage pickup.

#### **V. Old Business**

- a. NYC EDC Harlem River Park Charrettes dates pending
- b. CB 10 Parks Master Plan - still pending.
- c. Jackie Robinson Park Pool Conversion to Pool/Ice Skating Rink - permission received from the Board to form a subcommittee and schedule meetings
- d. William Atmore Byrd Classic Basketball Court Rename Request (inside of Langston Hughes Playground) - still pending

#### **VI. New Business - None**

#### **VII. Announcements**

- a. **2nd Annual Jackie Robinson Day Event** - Saturday, April 15th, 2023 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. the grandstand will be at the Bandshell, W. 148th St and Bradhurst Ave.

#### **VIII. Adjournment** - Motion made to adjourn by Hon. Barbara Nelson and seconded by Hon. Jaran Manzanet

**Meeting was adjourned at 8:46 pm.**

*~ Respectfully submitted by Parks and Recreation Chair, Hon. Karen Horry ~*